

SARS-CoV-2 and the Holidays...

Public health departments and epidemiologists are concerned that the entire country will see a COVID surge that could last for months after Thanksgiving, (and Christmas). Please think carefully about any potential exposures. COVID fatigue is real and we are unanimously tired of/exhausted by this pandemic and as a result many people are relaxing their standards. As a reminder, this virus is contagious 2-3 days before symptoms begin and some people never develop symptoms but can still spread the virus. [The latest research on pregnant people](#) identifies pregnancy as an independent risk factor for severe disease.

“pregnant women aged 35–44 years with COVID-19 were nearly four times as likely to require invasive ventilation and twice as likely to die than were nonpregnant women of the same age.”

Exposure to the virus is especially dangerous in the third trimester and fevers, a common symptom of SARS-CoV-2 infection, are known to be highly problematic in the first trimester. BIPOC pregnant people are at even greater risk of severe disease.

It is believed that [the surge that the Midwest in general and the Dakotas in specific is likely a result of the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally](#), an event where lots of people gathered without masks. The concern is that Thanksgiving and Christmas will cause similar spikes in the numbers throughout the entire country that could take weeks to abate.

Here is a [“must read” article](#) with excellent graphics about aerosol transmission in various settings and demonstrates what factors mitigate risk. Time and ventilation are some of the most important variables for the spread of this virus. There will be a lot of people mixing households and celebrating together unmasked during the holidays. CALM does not recommend this for pregnant people, (or people who live with pregnant people) and does not recommend spending time with anyone who has participated in unmasked events. **We are only as safe as our weakest link. Let’s keep each other safe.**

Here are the [CA Department of Public Health recommendations](#)

California state [holiday guidelines](#)

Here are the [CDC holiday recommendations](#)

This [map](#) shows the risk level of attending an event, given the event size and location.

This is a fascinating [risk calculator](#)

Here are CALM's general recommendations

- The most important thing to do is wear a well-fitted mask when in proximity to people you do not live with.
- Don't mix households unmasked even when outdoors
 - A physically distanced, masked outdoor walk, or outdoor event/backyard get together is very low risk if the masks stay on.
- Don't spend long periods of time indoors with people you don't live with even if you are masked (obviously this is impossible at labors/births)
 - If you must mix households, testing and quarantining for two weeks before and after exposure is best practice
- Though the current thought is that transmission through physical contact with objects is low, there is no harm and potential benefit to frequent hand washing and surface disinfection.

Recommendations for appointments and labor/birth

Ventilate, clean and exchange the air in your home

- Open the windows before (ideally a few hours before) your midwife/doula/birth support team arrives
- An exhaust fan on a window dramatically improves ventilation and reduces risk. At your birth we will have to close the windows shortly before the birth unless it is an exceptionally warm day as we do not want to chill your baby.
- If you have an air filter please run the filter before, during and after the appointment/labor. HEPA filters can trap viral particles and reduce infection rates.
- Disinfect high touch surfaces before midwife arrival
- Have paper towels available for hand washing during appointments/labor

Testing

- Consider testing. It would be best practice to test at 36-37 weeks and to continue regular testing for all adult members of the household until birth.
 - A positive test is almost always accurate, but a negative test can be a false negative up to 20% of the time, so while a negative test is reassuring it is not guaranteed to actually be negative and precautions should continue to be taken.

- For reference, the majority of labor and delivery departments statewide have been universally testing all pregnant people at admission for months. They are regularly finding asymptomatic positive pregnant people.
- If a client or a household member is positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus or has symptoms consistent with COVID, a hospital birth will be necessary as there are a certain percentage of pregnant people and newborns who decompensate rapidly in labor or the immediate postpartum and need hospital support.

Masks

- Ask your midwife about their mask wearing policies for birthing people during labor/birth. Best practice would be for all people to wear masks at all times. Your midwife may have some flexibility depending on local COVID rates.
- All midwives, doulas, photographers, children over the age of two, friends etc. present at a birth should wear a well-fitted mask at all times.
- Everyone over the age of two years should wear masks at prenatal and postpartum in-person appointments.
- Ask your midwife about outdoor and/or virtual prenatal and postpartum appointments.

COVID Information

[California state info with county maps](#)

COVID Testing

[Statewide testing information](#)

A detailed and fascinating [google doc](#) written by scientists on COVID. This Google Doc is regularly updated to reflect the most current data.