

## Keep Spring Traditions Low-Key for One More Year

The excitement of spring's arrival brings along with it plans for spring breaks, Easter celebrations, and other religious holidays. With the development of three safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, people across the country are more eager than ever to get a bit of "normalcy" back in their lives.

Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released new [guidance](#) for those who are fully vaccinated that includes how to safely gather indoors with other fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask as well as gathering indoors with unvaccinated people without masks. Much is still unknown, however, such as how long the vaccines remain effective or the risk of spreading COVID-19 even when vaccinated. Because of this, in combination with COVID-19 still highly prevalent in the U.S., officials are advising to heed caution when planning your traditional springtime celebrations.

"You probably didn't have a traditional Thanksgiving, Christmas or New Years. Easter is coming, and unfortunately I think we need a non-traditional Easter again as well. If possible, do a remote gathering. Contact people via Zoom or another online application to interact with your family members," says Dr. Bill Walsh, chief medical officer, OSF HealthCare Little Company of Mary Medical Center.

According to the CDC, people are considered fully vaccinated either two weeks after their second dose in a two-dose series (like the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines) or two weeks after a single-dose vaccine (like the Johnson & Johnson vaccine). If it has been less than two weeks since your shot, or if you still need to get your second dose, you are not fully protected.

While the CDC has provided guidance to keep Americans safe while traveling, it is important to pay attention to the rules set by the state you plan to. Most recently, a [state of emergency](#) was declared in Miami Beach, Florida due to overcrowding from spring breakers not following COVID-19 safety protocols.

"Just because you're feeling fatigued does not change how the virus behaves. The virus is going to do what it does whether you are fatigued from the pandemic or not. So continue to gather in small groups to discourage the spread, continue to wash your hands, keep your distance, and wear your masks," Dr. Walsh explains.

If you do plan to travel for spring break this year, the CDC has released [guidelines](#) for doing so safely. Before traveling, the CDC recommends getting fully vaccinated for COVID-19 if eligible and getting tested with a viral test one to three days before your trip.

In addition to spring break, multiple religious holidays also occur this time of year. Easter, Passover, and Ramadan are all soon approaching. According to the CDC, the safest way to observe religious and spiritual holidays this year is once again to either gather virtually, with people who live with you, or outside and at least six feet apart from others.

"If you do gather, keep the gatherings small. Keep your masks on as much as possible. Try to gather outdoors. I think an outdoor Easter egg hunt is a good idea," advises Dr. Walsh.

Other ways to safely celebrate religious holidays this spring include enjoying a traditional meal with those who live with you and attending services virtually, or outdoors if that is an option.

Whether you are contemplating what to do this year for spring break or an upcoming holiday, or if you already have activities planned, the most important thing is to evaluate the risks.

Dr. Walsh adds, "If we continue to do this, the vaccine will continue to work and continue to prevent people from getting sick – and we will get ahead of this pandemic and bring it to an end."