

Script – Broadcast – Celebrate the Holidays Safely

Every year, young children and big kids alike eagerly anticipate Christmas and all the festive traditions and celebrations that come with the holiday season.

But this year will look different due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Family celebrations will most likely be scaled down. Meaningful visits with neighbors and friends will be limited. Even trips to local shopping malls and other holiday destinations won't have the same feel.

SOT: Liz Levi, director of quality and patient safety, Northern Region, OSF HealthCare

"We want to do everything we can to keep our families safe and we may have to change the way we celebrate. But there's a component that we need to keep as much of it as normal or the same as we can because of all the stress on families and kids. Any time you can continue a tradition you've done in the past, while doing it safely, I think that's worth investing in." (:25)

One of the biggest changes this year will be the annual trek to the local mall to pay a visit to Santa Claus. Most malls and retailers have revamped plans for Santa visits to accommodate social distancing. Several malls are holding in-person, contactless visits where kids can share their wish list with Santa and, snap a photo, but from a comfortable distance by appointment only. Santa and children age 2 and older will be required to wear a mask.

SOT: Liz Levi, director of quality and patient safety, Northern Region, OSF HealthCare

"The biggest risk for kids visiting Santa this year is that we know Santa falls into that high risk category. We don't know exactly how old Santa is but he's certainly over 65 so he's higher risk there, and we know he eats lots of cookies around Christmas time so that potentially puts him in some other high-risk categories. We want Santa to be safe." (:22)

If you can't make it to the mall or don't feel comfortable with an in-person visit this year, there are other ways to reach Santa. The big jolly fellow is also connecting with children through virtual visits, and other long-time traditions, such as letter writing, are still viable options of getting your wishes delivered to the North Pole.

SOT: Liz Levi, director of quality and patient safety, Northern Region, OSF HealthCare

"You can google how to send a letter to Santa and it will give you all the instructions on how to do that through the post office," said Liz Levi, director of quality and patient safety, Northern Region, OSF HealthCare. "You can also send a letter to Santa Claus, Indiana. They have a whole volunteer team and they'll send a response back. In addition to letter writing there are a number of online sites where you can do an email letter to Santa, sometimes a phone call or virtual chat with Santa. So there's a number of ways to engage with Santa or Santa's helpers this year if you don't go to the mall." (:38)

But the fun doesn't stop with Santa's visit. Levi recommends other ways to celebrate the holidays safely this year, including putting out cookies or reindeer food; using Zoom to spend quality time with family and friends; dropping off care packages for elderly neighbors or shut-ins and, finally, making decorative holiday masks that you can wear or give away as gifts.

Levi adds that anything you can do to keep the holidays normal will go a long way to help reduce the stress adults and children have experienced for most of this year.

SOT: Liz Levi, director of quality and patient safety, Northern Region, OSF HealthCare

“The hardest thing about celebrating Christmas this year will be the fact that we can’t be with all of our friends and family members. It’s important to look at it as a sacrifice this year for the ability to all be together in the future.” (:13)

For more information on ways to stay safe this holiday season, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).