

## Don't Let Your Guard down this St. Patrick's Day

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic. This resulted in a nationwide cancellation of traditional St. Patrick's Day festivities – the first of many holidays that would be impacted by this pandemic. Now, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is advising against attending large gatherings once again this St. Patrick's Day.

**Bill Walsh, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, OSF HealthCare**

“Often, St. Patrick's Day is a time when many generations come together and celebrate. Please remember to keep your families safe. You don't want to get your parents or grandparents sick with COVID because they will be at the highest risk. Continue to practice the same precautions you have done to get us to the state we are in now.” (:23)

At the end of 2020, the first of three COVID-19 vaccines was developed and 80.5 million doses have been given in the U.S. since then – with 27 million people fully vaccinated to date. Many people are wondering if the St. Patrick's Day restrictions still apply to them if they have been vaccinated. Ultimately, the answer to that is yes.

**Bill Walsh, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, OSF HealthCare**

“Even if you are vaccinated and all of the people you plan to gather with are vaccinated, there still is a significant risk. We are not sure exactly how risky that is – however, you could spread COVID amongst yourselves, and then spread it to other loved ones or people at your workplace or other people you may interact with.” (:20)

Understandably, many Americans are feeling “[pandemic fatigue](#)” and plan to celebrate St. Patrick's Day in some way. Dr. Walsh urges people to celebrate safely while continuing to practice the CDC guidelines a little while longer, and to get the vaccine when it is your turn.

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“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](#).” (:18)

If all of these practices remain in place, the end of this pandemic will come sooner than if people begin to let their guards down too soon.

**Bill Walsh, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, OSF HealthCare**

“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.” (:10)

The CDC offers safe alternatives to traditional St. Patrick's Day festivities. In addition to decorating your home in St. Patrick's Day colors, shamrocks, and leprechauns, you can celebrate by making Irish-inspired recipes, having an outdoor neighborhood celebration with guests at least six feet apart and wearing masks, or by watching a virtual celebration. If you do plan to celebrate with others, the CDC reminds us that outdoors is safer than indoors.