

Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC)



# COVID-19 Update:

## Keeping safe and healthy through the holidays

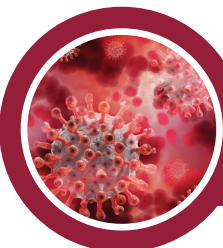
With the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic affecting Africa, now more than ever, it is important that we all adhere to following public health and social measures to protect our health and the health of our friends, family, and love ones this holiday season.

The likelihood that someone at a family gathering will be carrying the SARS-COV-2 virus is directly related to the number of infected people that are present in that community. In areas that are experiencing high transmission, there is a high likelihood that someone at your holiday gathering could be infected.

**OVER THE PAST MONTH:**

**31 MEMBER STATES**  
have experienced an increase in the number of new COVID-19 cases

**80% MEMBER STATES**  
reporting community transmission of the virus



### What we know about COVID-19 and SARS-COV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19

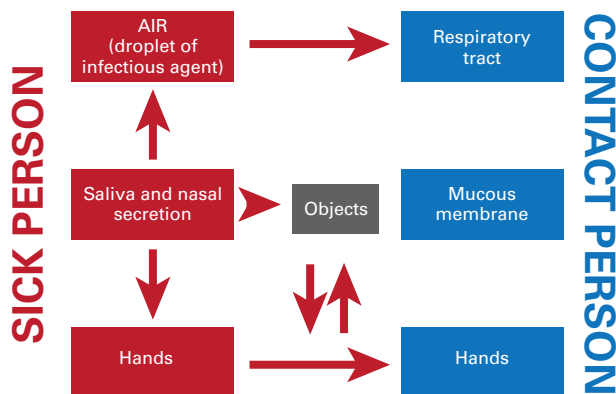


Traveling and gathering together this holiday season can be a risk for increasing the spread of the virus.



Outbreaks related to family gatherings have been well-documented and these are considered to be one of the most common sources of transmission along with going to restaurants, bars, and places of worship.

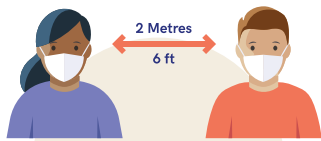
#### How are respiratory infections are transmitted?



- The virus can be transmitted by those not showing any symptoms (asymptomatic infection) or by people who are beginning to become sick, but do not have symptoms yet (presymptomatic infection).
- The main way the virus spreads is through close contact and interactions with an infected person.
- The virus is easily transmitted from one person to another through respiratory droplets spread when an infected person speaks or even breathes heavily. Activities such as coughing, sneezing, yelling or singing can increase transmission risk.
- When an infected person touches an object (e.g. doorknob, table) or coughs/ sneezes on a surface, other people can become infected by the virus by simply touching the contaminated surface and then touching their eyes, nose or mouths.



## What you can do to keep COVID-19 cases low this holiday season



Maintain a safe physical distance (1-2 metres) from others and avoid direct contact, handshakes, and hugging.



Wear a mask.



Wash hands frequently, and make sure that hand hygiene materials (soap and water and/or hand sanitizer) are plentiful and readily available for everyone to use.



Frequently clean and sanitize surfaces and shared items.



Avoid large crowds or gatherings and avoid venues where people are singing or shouting as this increases transmission risk.



Stay at home, wear a mask, and do not socialize if you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms (see below) or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19.



If you plan to travel for the holidays, access the **trusted travel portal** to make sure you adhere to travel requirements and for locations on where you can be tested.

## If you plan to gather with friends and family for the holidays:



- o Keep gatherings small (e.g. less than 10 people).



- o Use open air spaces or outside; if indoors, ventilate the space well by opening windows and doors.



- o Adhere to all of the above measures (distancing, always wearing a mask, reducing contact with people outside of the household) as much as possible, and particularly so for at least one week prior to a gathering.



- o If possible, seek testing and test negative at three to four days prior to a gathering.



- o Consider having one person who is wearing a mask serve all attendees so that serving utensils are not shared amongst multiple people.



- o If you are elderly or have underlying medical conditions such as diabetes or chronic lung disease, consider avoiding family gatherings all together until you can be vaccinated against COVID-19.



The safest approach this holiday is to celebrate at home with only the people you live with.

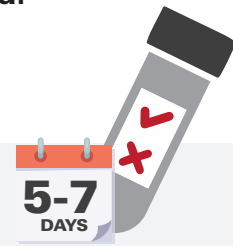
**If you suspect or know you have been exposed:**



*Do not attend family gatherings or social events if you think you may have been exposed to someone who is sick with COVID-19.*



*Quarantine yourself at home for at least 14 days after the known exposure.*



*If possible, test between 5-7 days after exposure. If you get tested too soon after an exposure, you may test negative even if you have COVID-19 (referred to as a false negative) because the virus may not be at a detectable level in your system just yet.*

*Monitor your health for the following symptoms:*



**Cough**



**Fever or chills**



**Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing**



**Loss of taste or smell**



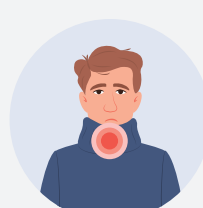
**Diarrhoea, nausea or vomiting**



**Body aches**



**Headache**



**Sore throat**



**Congestion or runny nose**

*If you experience any of the above symptoms, to reduce transmission to others isolate at home, wear a mask, and seek medical care if you experience shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. If you need guidance or have questions, you should call a medical professional.*

**We further encourage all Member States and Ministries of Health to:**

- Remain vigilant and ensure that surveillance teams, laboratories, and hospitals are adequately staffed and stocked to respond to and support a surge in cases over this holiday season.
- Consider putting in place or strengthening existing public health and social measures as cases start to rise.
- Access our guidance on **Responding to the Second Wave of COVID-19 in Africa** for more information.

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