

With the holiday season fast approaching and COVID-19 surging in most parts of the country, millions of Americans will break with tradition this year to celebrate in ways that we hope will help to keep us all safe and healthy.

With these conditions, the holidays may be a very difficult time for many of us. Celebrating holidays alone or with a very small group of people and missing the usual large family gatherings is a very sad thought. But, if you look at it another way, the pandemic does offer opportunities to make this holiday a season to remember in new and different ways. Here are a couple of ideas that you may want to consider:

Send Gifts. Although COVID-19 has changed our lives in many ways, sending cards or gifts remains a relatively easy way to let loved ones know that you're thinking of them. Who wouldn't want to receive some home-baked goodies, a basket of fresh fruit, or a festive wreath? If you enjoy knitting, candle making, or other ways of crafting gifts for the holidays, now's the time to start planning for the holidays.

Make Videos. Sing a song, act out a play, or simply say hello! If you don't play an instrument or like to sing, you can still make your own holiday-themed videos. Maybe share a dance routine, a demonstration of athletic skill, or even some stand-up comedy. The key is to have fun and let your imagination run free. Any way you decide to make this video, your family will appreciate you for thinking of them and getting creative.

Share a Meal Remotely. Most end-of-the-year holidays involve the family sitting around a table overflowing with delicious food. With all of the videoconferencing platforms now available, it is easy to set aside a block of time to share a meal and good conversation remotely with friends and family members, whether they live nearby or across the country. Everyone gets a chance to cook and share their stories via their smartphone, tablet, or laptop. You can compare your culinary creations, swap recipes, and try to remember to leave room for dessert. If you have a tradition of playing games or giving thanks for your many blessings, you can still do many of these activities remotely.

Take an After-Dinner Walk. Due to the physical demands and psychological impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's been difficult for many of us to stay physically active. The key is making exercise a daily priority, and the holidays are no different. After your holiday meal, go on a virtual group walk through your respective neighborhoods to work off the food. Thanks to your smartphone's camera, you can share your time outdoors and all of the interesting sights along the way. (Yes, the new playground in the local park looks *fantastic*, and the neighbors really *did* just paint their house purple!)

Stay Safe. If you plan to go ahead and join a holiday gathering in person, it's important to remain vigilant, even when interacting with dear friends and loved ones. The greatest risk for spread of COVID-19 right now is these family gatherings. Remember there are risks associated with travel and with interacting with people who've not been tested for the coronavirus prior to the event. Try to keep any family gatherings brief and relatively small, about five people or less. If the weather permits, hold the get-together outdoors.

For more information please visit:

<https://directorsblog.nih.gov/2020/11/12/planning-your-holidays-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>