

## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

# Recommendations for Tribal Ceremonies and Gatherings During the COVID-19 Outbreak

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Tribal ceremonies such as *sweat lodge, social gatherings and seasonal ceremonies*, and larger gatherings such as *pow wows and rodeos*, are a vital part of cultural identity and common and traditional practices in tribal communities. CDC offers the following recommendations to help tribal communities, elders, and leaders decide how best to keep their communities safe and work to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These considerations are meant to support—not replace—tribal laws, rules, and regulations aimed at protecting the health of tribal communities.

The more people who attend a ceremony or gathering, the closer they are to one another, and the longer they gather together, the higher the risk of spreading COVID-19. The *higher the level of community transmission* in the area that the gathering is being held, the risk of COVID-19 spreading during a gathering.

It is important to take steps now to protect tribal community members from getting sick before, during, and after participation in tribal ceremonies or other gatherings such as:

- sweats,
- birthday parties,
- pow wows,
- rodeos, and
- funerals.

This is especially true for tribal community members who may be at *higher risk*, such as *tribal elders* and people with *underlying medical conditions*.

What is done today, affects seven generations. The risk of COVID-19 spreading at events and gatherings including tribal seasonal ceremonies and gatherings increases as follows:

### Lowest risk:

Tribal ceremonies or gatherings are conducted virtually (e.g., by communicating online, or by video conferencing or telephone), if traditions allow.

### More risk:

Small in-person ceremonies or gatherings are held. Gatherings take place outside or in larger structures with good air flow. No food is served at ceremonies or gatherings. Tribal members remain at least 6 feet (or about 2 arms' lengths) away from others, wear cloth face coverings, and do not share or touch the same items.

### Higher risk:

Medium-sized in-person ceremonies or gatherings are adapted to allow tribal members to remain at least 6 feet apart. Tribal members are encouraged to wear cloth face coverings. Food is served in pre-packaged boxes with disposable utensils.



## Highest risk:

Large in-person ceremonies or gatherings are held where it is difficult for tribal members to remain at least 6 feet apart because of increased number of participants based on the venue size. Tribal members share or touch the same items. Food is served “potluck” or family style. Tribal members attending the ceremony or gathering come from multiple tribal communities or from outside the local geographic area.

## Tribal members should try to:



**Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If you can't wash your hands with soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.



**Avoid** touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



**Stay** at least 6 feet, or about 2 arms' lengths, away from others.



**Wear** a **cloth face covering**, especially when you are unable to stay 6 feet away from others. Cloth face coverings are meant to protect others in case one person is unknowingly infected with COVID-19 but does not have symptoms.

**Note:** Cloth face coverings should not be placed on children younger than 2 years old, anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, or anyone who is unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.



**Stay home if you are sick.**

## Tribal elders and leaders can:

Consider postponing, rescheduling, or canceling in-person tribal ceremonies or gatherings. Hold virtual tribal ceremonies or gatherings (e.g., by communicating online, or by video conferencing or telephone) or hold them at another time, as tribal traditions allow.

If tribal elders and leaders decide to proceed with holding an in-person tribal ceremony or cultural gathering, CDC offers the following suggestions to consider, in the context of tribal traditions.

- **Take steps** to limit the size of ceremonies or gatherings, as traditions allow.
- **Consider** holding events in a large, well-ventilated area or outdoors, as circumstances and traditions allow.
- **Encourage** tribal members to stay at least 6 feet, or 2 arms' lengths, away from others.
  - **Provide ample seating or viewing areas.**
  - **Provide physical guides**, such as use tape to mark floors or walkways and signs on walls, to ensure that tribal members remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times.
- **Encourage** the use of cloth face coverings, especially when it is difficult to stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- **Promote** healthy hygiene practices.
  - **Encourage tribal members to wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.** If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



- **Avoid buffet or family-style meals**, if possible. Have tribal members bring their own meals as feasible or serve meals on individual plates.
- **Use disposable eating and serving utensils** (e.g., plastic forks, spoons and knives; and paper dishes and cups). If disposable items are not feasible or desirable, ensure that all non-disposable utensils are handled with gloves and washed with dish detergent and hot water or in a dishwasher. Individuals should [wash their hands](#) after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items.
- **Avoid sharing food, containers, and utensils.**
- **Consider** posting signs in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances, in restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs by properly washing hands and properly wearing a cloth face covering.

- **Provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors**, including soap, clean water, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, tissues, and no-touch trash cans.
- **Stay home** if you are a sick person or have had close contact with someone who is sick with COVID-19.
- **Increase cleaning and disinfection** and limit use of shared items.
- **Clean and disinfect frequently** touched surfaces at least daily and clean shared items between uses, if possible.
- **Consider limiting the sharing** of frequently touched items that are passed or shared among tribal members.
- **Ensure safe and correct use and storage** of disinfectants, including storing products securely away from children.
- **Consider** not serving food or changing how food is served.

## Other Resources

- [Tribal Communities](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions: Funeral and Burial Services for American Indians and Alaska Natives](#)
- [Social Distancing for Tribal Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission](#)
- [Exercise Safe Sweats \[1 minute\]](#)

## References

- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Considerations for Communities of Faith](#)
- [Considerations for Events and Gatherings](#)
- [Considerations for Schools](#)

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