

Is it safe for unvaccinated children to have birthday parties?

June 2 2021, by Dr. Datta Munshi, American Academy Of Pediatrics



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Q: My kids want to have birthday parties this summer, but they are too young for the COVID-19 vaccine. Is it safe for them and their friends?

A: Families can lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission during [get-togethers](#), even with kids too young to get the [vaccine](#) yet. The key is to take some extra precautions.

We are all ready for a return to our normal, including familiar family traditions like backyard cookouts and birthday parties. Anyone 12 and older can now receive COVID-19 vaccines in the United States, making it safe for small groups of fully vaccinated people to gather. While vaccines are not yet authorized for [younger children](#), extra safety steps can help keep them safe.

Keep gatherings to less than 10 children and choose outdoor venues whenever possible. (Think a fun and festive picnic!) Being outside can lower the risk of transmitting the virus through the air, which is the main way it spreads.

If there is any need to go inside, open windows to increase air circulation. Choose a space large enough that children can keep a safe physical distance of at least 3 feet from each other.

When planning the party, involve your child to identify what is most important to him or her during the celebration. This can help narrow down the party itinerary and limit risk. Then, tweak the activities with safety in mind.

Consider individual cupcakes, with a candle only on the birthday child's treat, rather than a single, large cake. When it's time to sing "Happy Birthday," blow out candles and eat—activities that can spread more germs in the air—try to allow some extra room. If you do have a large cake, skip the candles and have a single person slice it and hand out pieces.

Offer single-serve beverages rather than pouring from shared containers.

Pre-filled water bottles decorated with guests' names can be a great take-home party favor.

Choose games and activities that don't involve close physical contact. Individual crafts and classic games like charades, Simon Says, Freeze Frame, and Spud (using a soft foam ball) can be good choices.

Brainstorm together for other ideas, such as a nature scavenger hunt or a "drive-in" movie, where each child gets a box they can decorate and "park" a safe distance apart.

Until more of us are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, make sure everyone at the party follows basic safety steps. These includes frequent hand washing, physical distancing and wearing face masks, especially in crowded indoor or outdoor spaces.

Remember that if you or your child are coughing or have cold-like symptoms, or have had a fever, vomiting or diarrhea in the past 24 hours, you should not host a birthday party. Be sure to let other parents know that their child should not attend the party if he or she is unwell.

Children and teens have had an especially tough time dealing with all the changes needed to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. We can help children ease back into dearly missed events like [birthday](#) parties and other important celebrations such as family reunion picnics and Fourth of July beach cookouts.

Just remember to prioritize safety, head outside whenever possible, be creative and flexible when needed, and get your [children](#) their COVID-19 vaccines when you can.

The vaccine is free and states have websites that offer vaccine finders in your area. We can get back to a more normal life when more of us get the vaccine and give COVID-19 nowhere to thrive.

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