

Should you go sick to a party? How to navigate travel, family gatherings during tripledemic

December 22 2022, by Michelle Marchante



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It seems like whenever there's a party, someone goes home sick.

Dr. Ladan Pourmasiha, a family medicine physician for Baptist Health,

regularly sees patients coming in with coughs, runny noses and sore throats after large gatherings. She's the medical director for Baptist Health South Florida's Urgent Care Centers in Broward County.

Pourmasiha said she saw an increase of people sick with COVID and the flu after Thanksgiving. She expects more will trickle in to the doctor's office with colds after Christmas, too.

The festivities are happening in the midst of what some are calling a tripledemic. It's not just COVID-19 that's circulating, there's also influenza and [respiratory syncytial virus](#), or RSV. And there are other viruses going around town too that can cause cold-like [symptoms](#).

If you don't want to have FOMO—Fear of Missing Out—on the holiday fun, you should take some precautions to try and reduce your chances of getting ill.

This year's flu season, for example, began earlier and has led to people hospitalized for the flu at levels not seen during this time of year in over a decade.

RSV, a common childhood virus, has also led to a surge of illnesses this year, enough to strain some pediatric hospitals in the U.S. And while reported COVID-19 cases are lower than in the last two Decembers, cases are ticking up again (there's also more at-home testing).

So, how to avoid getting sick? And what precautions can you take if someone shows up sick at your [holiday party](#)? We asked Pourmasiha for tips:

Holiday travel, gathering tips to avoid getting sick

- Reduce your outings leading up to the big day, and speak with

your family to make sure everyone is taking similar precautions.

- If you're planning to take a flight, consider wearing a mask while at the airport and on the plane, Pourmasiha said, especially in "high risk situations," such as when everyone crowds together to board and get off the plane.
- For people hosting parties and dinners, try to move the celebrations outdoors if you're concerned about getting sick. If not, host the party in a well-ventilated and spacious room.
- If traveling, don't forget to pack a mini first-aid kit. Just like how you pack shoes, clothes and other essentials, make sure to take some medicine with you, Pourmasiha said. You'll want to pack some pain relief and/or fever reducing medication, just in case you fall ill while traveling. No one likes to go shopping when they're sick. Pourmasiha also recommends checking to see where the nearest urgent care centers, pharmacies and hospitals are to your hotel, just in case you start feeling really ill.
- Make sure you're up to date with your flu and COVID-19 vaccines.

What should you do if you get sick?

- Get tested if you have symptoms. A tip: Some places, like Nomi Health operated sites in Miami-Dade County, will simultaneously test you for both COVID-19 and the flu.
- If you test positive for COVID-19, you should stay home for at least five days and isolate from others, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. If you have to go out in public, wear a mask.

You can end isolation after five days if you're asymptomatic, according to CDC guidelines. If you have symptoms, you can end isolation after five days if your symptoms are improving or if you've been fever-free for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, the CDC says.

However, you should still wear a mask around others until the 10th day. You can get rid of the mask sooner if you test negative with two [antigen tests](#), 48 hours apart.

I have a cold, but it's not COVID. Can I still gather with others?

Pourmasiha said you should speak with your family about the situation and consider who will be at the gathering. Is there someone in the family who is immunocompromised, for example?

If you do end up going to the party, Pourmasiha said you should make sure to cough and sneeze into your elbow and avoid touching frequently touched surfaces. That means stay away from the eggnog bar and the serving area. Try to [social distance](#), wear a mask or move the party outside.

What if someone shows up sick to my party? What should I do?

Well, that's up to you. Assuming you don't want to tell them to leave, you can take precautions, just like you would anywhere else. Frequently wash your hands and clean frequently touched surfaces. You could also wear a mask, take the party outside and try to social distance.

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Citation: Should you go sick to a party? How to navigate travel, family gatherings during

tripledeemic (2022, December 22) retrieved 25 April 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-12-sick-party-family-tripledeemic.html>

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