

COVID Safe Christmas Festivities

With just over 6 weeks to Christmas, people are starting to plan their Christmas festivities. Like everything else this year, we're going to have to do things a little differently to stay healthy!

Can We Still Have Christmas Parties and Gatherings this Year?

- Yes – but we need to take into account precautions against COVID including number restrictions.

So What Do We Need to Consider When Deciding How Many to Invite?

- Firstly, look at the number of people you're allowed to invite into your home. The number you can have inside will be less than the number you can have outside.
- If you're having larger gathering outside but remember the weather can be unpredictable. Consider what you're going to do if it rains – you may not be able to have everyone inside.
- You also need to consider social distancing – if you're planning an outside gathering but only have a tiny courtyard, you won't be able to fit 20 people in!

Can We Invite Anyone We want?

- We certainly can – but you may like to consider the mix of people. For example, if you are having elderly people there, they're more susceptible to a virus like COVID so you need to ensure that you aren't inviting anyone from a developing hotspot.
- Some people still won't be comfortable with attending parties, especially large ones. You may want to consider several gatherings with small groups so everyone can feel safe and cared for.

What Will Be Different at the Party Itself?

- Firstly – an abundance of hand sanitiser or, for those people who can't use sanitiser, somewhere they can wash their hands and dry them on paper towels. It may be a good idea to put bottles of hand sanitiser on tables around the room or yard and encourage guests to use them.
- The next thing to consider is social distancing. People still have to sit 1.5 meters apart. You may want to place chairs correctly distanced or around small tables and encourage people to move from chair to chair rather than move the chairs around.
- At the moment, if you still have to wear masks – particularly indoors. Of course, you can remove them to eat or drink but then they need to go back on.
- Greeting people with a hug is still not acceptable. This will be hard for relatives you haven't seen in a long time, especially elderly relatives so consider other things you can do show your affection: give some flowers from your garden or a little packet of home cooked biscuits.
- Consider how you're going to handle it if someone arrives who is clearly unwell – coughing or wheezing. It maybe good if, when inviting people, you ask them not to come if they're unwell.
- Consider scattering packets of antiseptic wipes around. Some people will feel more comfortable being able to wipe down chairs, tables or their eating utensils as they move around.

What About Serving Food?

- There are some changes to serving food. Unfortunately, the communal chip bowl or passing around a cheese platter isn't acceptable. Placing small servings of food in little bowls that offered to guests on trays may get around this. Trays should be wiped down after each round.
- Utensils such as forks or spoons can't be left out on a table for people help themselves. Try putting a fork and spoon in small clip seal bags which are offered to guests with their food.
- Offer guests something to drink as they arrive and encourage them to stick with the same glass which is then topped up. If they "lose" it, give them another rather than search for it.
- Used glasses, plates and utensils should be quickly removed and washed in hot soapy water or put in the bin.

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