



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

October 26, 2020

DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR

No. 2020- 0355

TO: ALL UNDERSECRETARIES AND ASSISTANT SECRETARIES; DIRECTORS OF BUREAUS, SERVICES AND CENTERS FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT; MINISTER OF HEALTH - BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO; EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF SPECIALTY HOSPITALS AND NATIONAL NUTRITION COUNCIL; DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PHILIPPINE INSTITUTE OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND ALTERNATIVE HEALTH CARE; CHIEFS OF MEDICAL CENTERS, HOSPITALS, SANITARIA AND INSTITUTES; PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION; DIRECTORS OF PHILIPPINE NATIONAL AIDS COUNCIL SECRETARIAT AND TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION CENTERS AND ALL OTHERS CONCERNED

SUBJECT: Reiteration of the Minimum Public Health Standards for COVID-19 Mitigation during the Holidays

The DOH recognizes the significance of continuing to celebrate family and cultural traditions during the holidays. To ensure the health and safety of everyone participating in holiday celebrations and activities, certain preventive measures and strategies must be observed. This Order is hereby being issued to provide guidance on how to continue to observe the minimum public health standards during the holidays.

Below are the risk-mitigation measures to make holiday celebrations and activities safer:

RISKS	WHAT TO DO
The higher the number of participants in the activity, the higher the risk.	Limit the number of people in family and social gatherings and activities, preferably people within the same household. All activities must observe the restrictions on mass gatherings, as stated in DOH AO 2020-0015, wherein activities in areas under General Community Quarantine (GCQ) are allowed a maximum of ten (10) individuals, while activities in areas under Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ) are allowed a maximum

	<p>of fifty (50) individuals. Mass gatherings are not permitted in high risk areas or areas under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ).</p> <p>For further guidance, please refer to DOH Administrative Order No. 2020-0015¹, and IATF Omnibus Guidelines on the Implementation of Community Quarantine in the Philippines.</p>
<p>Activities with participants who are travelling from areas of higher quarantine classification may increase the risk of spreading the virus to areas with lower quarantine classification.</p>	<p>Avoid activities that require travel to areas with higher quarantine classification.</p> <p>Participate using online platforms if possible. If not, make sure to follow the quarantine protocols of the destination. Interzonal movement, or the movement of persons across areas of different quarantine classifications may be permitted subject to existing guidelines of the concerned Local Government Unit (LGU)</p> <p>For further guidelines on interzonal movement, please refer to IATF Resolution No. 79.</p>
<p>The longer the duration of an activity, the greater the risk.</p>	<p>Keep activities as short as possible.</p> <p>Activities lasting more than fifteen (15) minutes are considered to be of higher risk. If participating in an activity longer than 15 mins., wear a mask and keep at least one (1) meter distance from other participants.</p>
<p>Some actions may increase the risk of spreading the virus.</p>	<p>Always observe BIDA:</p> <p><i>B - Bawal walang mask;</i> <i>I - I-sanitize ang mga kamay;</i> <i>D - Dumistansya ng isang metro; and</i> <i>A - Alamin ang totoong impormasyon.</i></p> <p>Activities that involve talking, shouting, heavy-breathing, singing and the like increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission because of the possible spread of respiratory droplets. As such, always wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (face mask, face shield, etc) and practice good hand hygiene (handwashing or disinfection using alcohol-based sanitizers). A costume mask is NOT a substitute for a face mask.</p>

¹ DOH Administrative Order No. 2020-0015: Guidelines on the Risk-based Public Health Standards on COVID-19 Mitigation

	<p>For further guidance on proper use of masks, refer to DOH Department Memorandum 2020-0346.²</p>
<p>Sharing of items or exposure to high-touch surfaces may increase your risk.</p>	<p>Avoid high-touch surfaces and ensure cleanliness of surroundings.</p> <p>Household items may be contaminated by respiratory droplets. Hence, avoid unnecessary touching of surfaces and sharing of household items. Clean and disinfect regularly and ensure proper disposal of waste especially used tissues and face masks.</p> <p>For halloween celebration, households, communities and businesses distributing treats are encouraged to have treats individually packaged to reduce contact among individuals. Packaging must also be disinfected prior to distribution.</p> <p>For family gatherings, pre-plated food service is encouraged. Buffet-style food service may increase contact among individuals.</p> <p>For christmas celebrations, ensure proper hand hygiene before and after exchanging gifts. Hand washing facilities and/or hand sanitizers and disinfectants must be readily available.</p> <p>For more guidance on disinfection of surfaces, please refer to DOH Department Memorandum 2020-0157³.</p>
<p>Activities held indoors or in enclosed spaces with no mechanisms to introduce fresh air puts individuals at risk for contracting the virus.</p>	<p>Ensure proper ventilation of an activity's venue.</p> <p>Hold family and social gatherings and activities outdoors as much as possible. If activities will be held indoors, ensure that fresh air is introduced to the venue through open doors and windows and avoid air-conditioning settings which recirculate air.</p> <p>For more guidance on ventilation for COVID-19 mitigation, refer to DOH Department Memorandum 2020-0429⁴.</p>
<p>Exposure to someone with COVID-like symptoms</p>	<p>If sick, stay at home and avoid social gatherings.</p>

² DOH Department Memorandum No. 2020-0346: Advice on the Use of Masks during the COVID-19 Pandemic

³ DOH Department Memorandum 2020-0157: Guidelines on Cleaning and Disinfection in Various Settings as an Infection Prevention and Control Measure Against COVID-19

⁴ DOH Department Memorandum 2020-0429: Guidance on Ventilation for COVID-19 Mitigation

<p>increases your risk.</p>	<p>Individuals experiencing COVID-like symptoms such as cough, sore throat, loss of smell, among others are advised to stay at home and isolate. Those who are awaiting COVID-19 test results, and close contacts are likewise advised the same. This reduces the risk of spreading the disease to other individuals. If an individual is a suspect or any family member has contracted COVID-19, a primary care or telemedicine provider or the Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT) must be consulted.</p> <p>For more guidance, refer to DOH Department Memorandum 2020-0439⁵.</p>
<p>Certain illnesses or conditions puts one at higher risk of COVID-19.</p>	<p>If an individual is vulnerable to disease, participation from large social gatherings and risky activities must be limited.</p> <p>To decrease risk of contracting the virus, individuals at increased risk of contracting severe COVID-19 illness, or are in frequent contact with someone who is at increased risk (elderly, pregnant women, individuals with underlying medical conditions) are advised to avoid large social gatherings and risky activities. If not possible, observe minimum public health standards.</p>

To further increase physical and mental resilience, kindly observe the following recommendations:

- **Practice healthy eating**

Ensure proper nutrition by eating foods based on Variety, Balance and Moderation. One can achieve this by following the “Pinggang Pinoy”⁶ by the DOST-FNRI. Avoid foods that are high in salt, sugar and fat, especially in social gatherings. Opt for healthier alternatives such as fruits and vegetables. When serving food, ensure that the food is cooked properly and prepared in a clean environment.

- **Perform health-enhancing physical activities**

It is recommended to have at least 30 minutes of physical activity per day. Non-contact physical activities are the recommended types of physical activity to minimize the risk of COVID-19, preferably in areas wherein an individual can observe physical distancing and natural ventilation. For more guidance on the conduct of health-enhancing physical activity, please refer to PSC-GAB-DOH Joint

⁵ DOH Department Memorandum No. 2020-0439: Omnibus Interim Guidelines on Prevention, Detection, Treatment, and Reintegration Strategies for COVID-19.

⁶ <https://www.fnri.dost.gov.ph/index.php/tools-and-standard/pinggang-pinoy>

Administrative Order No. 2020-001⁷.

- **Protect one's mental health**

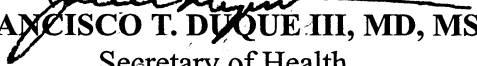
Protecting one's mental health can range from a variety of activities. These include getting enough sleep, maintaining social networks and having trusted people to talk to. It is also recommended to practice mindfulness through meditation, limiting use of gadgets and exposure to social media, or keeping a daily journal. If needed, professional services should be sought. If an individual is in need of professional mental health support, call the National Center for Mental Health Crisis Hotline at 0917-899-8727 (0917-899-USAP) or (02) 7-989-8728 / (02) 7-989-USAP

- **Prevent illness and injury**

Avoid the use of fireworks and firecrackers to prevent injuries and incidents arising from its use. Communities are encouraged to observe and comply with the provisions of Executive Order No. 28 s. 2017⁸, which limits the use of fireworks to community fireworks displays. When viewing community fireworks displays, observe the minimum public health standards at all times.

In view of the ongoing La Niña phenomenon, everyone is advised to stay home during heavy rains and be ready to evacuate when advised by local officials especially if you are residing in low lying areas. Avoid wading and taking baths in floodwaters, and be guided by advisories from national and local authorities.

Dissemination to all concerned is requested.



FRANCISCO T. DUQUE III, MD, MSc
Secretary of Health

⁷ PSC-GAB-DOH Joint Administrative Order 2020-001: Guidelines on the Conduct of Health-Enhancing Physical Activities and Sports during COVID-19

⁸ Executive Order No. 28 s. 2017: Providing for the Regulation and Control of the Use of Firecrackers and other Pyrotechnic Devices

Annex A. Checklist for Safer Holiday Celebrations during the pandemic

HOW TO SAFELY CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAY SEASON *DOH Recommendations for Safer Holiday Celebrations*

- Limit the number of people in social gatherings and activities, preferably people within the same household.
- Avoid activities that require travel to areas with higher quarantine classification.
- Keep activities as short as possible.
- Always observe BIDA:
 - B** - *Bawal walang mask;*
 - I** - *I-sanitize ang mga kamay;*
 - D** - *Dumistansya ng isang metro; and*
 - A** - *Alamin ang totoong impormasyon.*
- Avoid touching high-touch surfaces and ensure cleanliness.
- Ensure proper ventilation of an activity's venue
- If an individual is vulnerable to disease, limit participation from large social gatherings and risky activities.
- If sick, stay at home and avoid social gatherings. A primary care or telemedicine provider or BHERT must be consulted if an individual is a suspect or a family member has contracted COVID-19.
- Increase physical and mental resilience
 - Practice healthy eating
 - Perform health-enhancing physical activities
 - Protect one's mental health
 - Prevent illness and injury

Annex B. Risk Assessment Matrix for Activity

	NO RISK	LOWER RISK	HIGHER RISK
Participation	Via Video Teleconferencing	In-person activities wherein face masks will be worn at all times and physical distancing can be observed,	In-person activities where face masks will be taken off at any point during the activity and where physical distancing is compromised
Participants		All participants are from own household	Participants from different households and/or with participants who travelled from an area with higher quarantine classification
Duration		Less than 15 minutes	More than 15 minutes
Actions		No risky actions before, during, and after the event	Shouting Singing Talking
Environment		Outdoor	Indoor

Annex C. Risk Assessment of Holiday Activities

Lower Risk	Moderate Risk	Higher Risk
<i>Halloween Activities</i>		
Decorating living space with halloween decorations	Outdoor trick-or-treating activities where social distancing is observed and treats are individually pre-packed and distributed through no-touch and physically-distant methods.	Trick-or-treating where treats and participants are exposed to contact
Online Halloween gathering with friends	Outdoor, small group gatherings, guided by the restriction on mass gatherings wherein a maximum of 10 individuals are allowed in areas under GCQ and a maximum of 50 individuals are allowed in areas under MGCQ.	Indoor costume parties
Halloween activities with friends and family members living in the same house		Going through an indoor, enclosed haunted house
<i>Religious Activities and Services (e.g. Simbang Gabi)</i>		
Attending online masses	Outdoor, small group gatherings where physical distancing is observed, and is guided by the restriction on mass gatherings wherein a maximum of 10 individuals are allowed in areas under GCQ and a maximum of 50 individuals are allowed in areas under MGCQ.	Attending in-person religious activities held indoor, enclosed spaces with the number of participants exceeding that of the recommended limit
		Activities that involve risky actions such as singing, shouting, and forms of physical contact
<i>Activities for Noche Buena, Media Noche and other family gatherings for Christmas and New Year's</i>		

<p>Dinner with family and friends living in the same household</p>	<p>Outdoor, small group gatherings where physical distancing is observed, and is guided by the restriction on mass gatherings wherein a maximum of 10 individuals are allowed in areas under GCQ and a maximum of 50 individuals are allowed in areas under MGCQ.</p>	<p>Shopping in crowded markets, tiangges, Christmas bazaars, and shopping malls</p>
<p>Virtual gathering with family and friends not living in the same household</p>		<p>Indoor gathering of a large group of people</p>
<p>Online shopping for holiday presents</p>		<p>Gatherings involving risky actions such as singing, shouting, dancing, and the like.</p>