

## Newsletter 23 Dec 2020

### Festive Season, holidays and COVID-19

It is wonderful to at last feel that 2020 is drawing to a close with the holidays here. But please remember not to let your guard down – the virus is still here!

All holiday travels will be perfectly safe if all the following guidelines are adhered to. Travelling by road in your own vehicle is the safest. However everyone in the vehicle needs to be vigilant that they do not lapse on mask wearing, sanitizing and distancing whilst out of the car, so as not to bring COVID into the vehicle. You need to protect each other.

Travel on public transport is more difficult to manage – please wear a good quality mask all the time and open the windows, if possible, to keep good ventilation. Take spare masks with you for long distance travel so you can change your mask if it becomes sweaty or damp (after about 6-8 hours). It is important to sanitize your hands before touching your mask and after touching your mask. Your used mask can be kept in a Ziploc bag or brown paper bag until you have an opportunity to wash it or discard it if disposable. Keep a small bottle of sanitizer (70% alcohol) on hand at all times.

Bathroom and food stops should be kept to a minimum, both being as quick as possible. Eat outside the vehicle whilst maintaining social distancing of > 1.5m.

Air travel is relatively safe. Planes have their own filters which are effective at removing the virus, and these stay in operation whilst disembarking. The high-risk areas are queueing at the check-in and getting on-board. If the basic guidelines are adhered to, wearing a mask over your mouth and nose and not removing it to eat or drink, you should be safe. Try to maintain your distance from other travellers when collecting your baggage from the carousel.

Obviously do not travel if you are unwell – contact your doctor as you may need to isolate for 10 days.

When you arrive at your venue it's a good idea to do a quick wipe down of all the obvious "touch" areas eg light switches, remotes, hand rails and open the windows to ventilate the place.

Holiday activities should be outdoors as much as possible. Restaurants that have an outdoor seating area are safer than indoor restaurants. The beach is relatively safe, as is swimming in the ocean as long as you stay a good distance from people who do not live in the same space as you. Hiking is perfectly safe with small groups.

Alcohol reduces inhibitions and increases the chances of inadvertent exposure to the virus. Holiday romances will be particularly risky during this pandemic and should be avoided in order to protect your travel group from Sar-CoV-2 exposure.

Large family gatherings (even at home) may be risky, and weddings, funerals and nightclubs are known to be "superspreading" events.

The most vulnerable people are those with diabetes, obesity, hypertension, and the elderly. We need to be mindful of them and the possible consequences should they get COVID-19. It is human behaviour that spreads this virus, hence a reminder to

- Keep your distance, avoid crowds and do group meetings of less than 15 mins or outdoors
- Wear a 3-ply cloth mask in public spaces or with people with whom you do not live
- Avoid indoor spaces with poor ventilation; keep windows and doors open
- Do as much as possible in an outdoor space
- Wash your hands and sanitise regularly when outside of your home

- Avoid being with anyone who is ill, and do not meet friends if you are not feeling 100%

Let us start the New Year with optimism, and make every effort to keep ourselves and those around us healthy!

Yours in health,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louise". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Dr Louise Wiggins