



May 11th, 2020

Dear North Texas,

Attached is a thoughtful document to guide us as we navigate in our community during the COVID-19 pandemic. The document was prepared by the Public Health Committee made up of public health, epidemiology, and infectious disease leaders who have prepared their entire adult lives to advise us in this moment. Their goal is to keep us safe through continued containment of COVID19.

Remember, just because we can do something doesn't mean we should do it. Discouraged actions should not be considered as personal infringements but rather as acts of solidarity with local health professionals, our neighbors, and those with whom we care for most. By adhering to these suggestions, we will compound the progress we've made and arrive more quickly – and safely – to gathering with the community we've come to know and love.

Best,

Clay Lewis Jenkins

Dallas County Judge

Dallas County COVID-19 Health Guidance for the Public

1. **Assume personal responsibility** – Public health guidance cannot anticipate every unique situation. Residents should take responsibility, stay informed, take actions based on common sense, and follow the guidance offered by health care experts.

2. **Do an honest self-assessment** – In addition, all individuals are encouraged to perform an honest self-assessment before engaging in activities outside of the home. This assessment should include asking two questions:

- Am I healthy enough to leave the home, or do I fall into a high-risk category, based on age or other medical conditions?
- Is there someone in my home, or someone I interact with on a regular basis, who falls into a high-risk category?

If the answer to either of these questions is yes, then exercise extra caution and discretion before leaving the home. Is it a want or is it a need?

3. **Perform protective hygiene, Distance yourself physically and clean the environment** – Dallas County residents should practice good hygiene and cleaning practices to minimize the risk of transmission of the virus. These include but are not limited to the following:

- a. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds as frequently as possible or use hand sanitizer after interactions with people or objects
- b. Stay home if ill
- c. Cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue or do it into the sleeve or elbow, not hands
- d. Clean high-touch surfaces (buttons, door handles, counters, etc.) regularly
- e. Avoid touching your face
- f. Refrain from hand shaking
- g. Physically distance and keep 6 feet between people
- h. Wear a facial covering when out in public or when in the company of others.

4. **Assess the Risk** - Individuals should assess their risk and make decisions based on their specific circumstances. Those at high risk for COVID-19 (elderly, diabetic, etc.) and those around them should use extra precautions as outlined by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and Dallas County Health and Human Services (DCHHS).

Activities	High Community Risk for COVID-19 Transmission	Moderate Community Risk for COVID-19 Transmission	Low Community Risk for COVID-19 Transmission	New Normal Risk for COVID-19 Transmission
Going to a restaurant	Individuals should avoid dine-in eating and limit to drive-through, curbside takeout or delivery. Individuals should look for safe practices in the establishment such as staff wearing facial coverings, touch-free options for payment and pickup.	Drive-through, curbside Takeout or delivery options remain preferable. Dine-in should only be considered if tables are appropriately spaced (>6 feet), occupancy levels are low, and staff and other patrons are wearing facial coverings and observing physical distancing. Avoid or exercise extreme caution if over 65 or in a high risk group. (Facial coverings should be worn when not eating).	Dine-in in services with appropriate physical distancing (>6 feet) and moderate occupancy can be considered. Continue to seek establishments keeping staff and patrons safe by wearing facial coverings and other good practices. (Facial coverings should be worn when not eating).	Dine-in restaurants operating under proper safety precautions for staff & customers.
Going Shopping	Limit trips to once a week or as necessary. Avoid all but essential shopping and opt for delivery or curbside pick-up if available. Practice strict physical distancing while in stores and wear cloth face coverings. Avoid stores where staff are not wearing facial coverings or other safety precautions are not being enforced. Avoid if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Continue to limit trips and practice physical distancing. Facial coverings should be worn by patrons and store employees. Trips to non-essential stores such as retail could be considered, but delivery or curbside pick-up are still preferred. Avoid if over 65 or in a high risk group.	In-store shopping with physical distancing and facial coverings. Avoid crowded stores or seek alternate times to do your shopping. Shopping for non-essential items should be kept to a minimum.	Continue personal protective measures like facial coverings and physical distancing.
Travel/Tourism	Eliminate non-essential travel and group settings. For essential travel, practice strict physical distancing, wear facial coverings, and look for places with no-contact payment and staff taking appropriate precautions. Avoid all group settings or crowded areas at hotels or other facilities. Do not eat in shared dining areas. Avoid travel if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Avoid non-essential travel and continue practicing physical distancing and wearing facial coverings. Wipe down shared spaces frequently. Follow airline, hotel and other safety guidelines. Avoid dining in group settings in hotels or other facilities (see restaurant guidance above). Avoid travel if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Practice physical distancing, good hand hygiene, and wearing facial coverings. Limited non-essential travel, though travel may be considered to locations without high or medium community COVID-19 spread. Reduce and minimize time spent in group settings.	Continue personal protective measures. Non-essential travel may be considered if there is no high or medium COVID-19 community spread. Practice physical distancing and minimize time spent in group settings.
Attending Events & Entertainment	Avoid group settings. Opt for in-home entertainment options to avoid unnecessary risk.	Attendance not recommended. Only attend events with good practices in place to ensure safe distancing restrictions. Smaller events with less than 10 people preferred. Wear facial coverings. Options like drive-in movies would be preferred if physical distancing can be maintained throughout the whole event. Avoid if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Attend events only with proper physical distancing practices in place. Opt for small to medium size events (<50 people) to avoid large group settings.	Attending events with larger groups can be considered. Practice good physical distancing and frequent hand hygiene.

Visiting Outdoor Entertainment (Zoos, Arboretum, Concerts, Theme Parks)	Not recommended unless maintaining physical distancing is possible. All high touch surfaces should be avoided. Practice strict hand hygiene. Facial coverings should be worn by visitors and staff. Avoid if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Consider some entertainment options as long as physical distancing can be maintained and proper cleaning is taking place on high touch services such as tables, rides, etc. The number of people at events should remain limited, consider waiting to attend if there are crowds and physical distancing is not possible. Wear facial coverings and look for staff and other patrons to do the same.	Continue good personal protective measures such as facial coverings and physical distancing. Consider events that are less crowded and have better controls to keep you safe, such as capped numbers of attendees and good cleaning practices.	Attending events with larger groups can be considered. Practice good physical distancing and frequent hand hygiene.
Going to Movie Theaters	Not recommended.	Attendance not recommended unless seating is spaced to allow 6ft of space around each individual or household group. Capacity should be limited to less than 25% occupancy. Practice hand hygiene. Facial coverings should be worn by all patrons and staff due to being inside an enclosed space for a long duration of time. Look for places with good cleaning and safety practices. Avoid if over 65 or in a high risk group. Limit food consumption from concession stands if good hand hygiene can't be maintained.	Practice physical distancing, hand hygiene and wear facial coverings. Continue to look for facilities with good operational practices and controls to keep you safe. Utilize good cleaning.	Higher occupancy rates and limited physical distancing may be allowed. If possible, continue to sit well spaced from other attendees and practice good personal protective measures including hand hygiene and wearing a facial covering.
Attending Religious Services/ Funerals/Large Gatherings	Avoid in-person attendance. Utilize virtual methods such as live streaming, or other social media-based platforms, for continuance of faith practices. Avoid if over 65 or in a high risk group.	In-person attendees should be limited to a number that allows full physical distancing (6 ft on all sides); ideally fewer than 10 people. Cloth facial coverings should be worn by all attendees. Hand hygiene should be practiced. Avoid specific practices that involve close interaction, touch, or shared objects. Avoid social gatherings that may precede or follow services. Avoid if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Maintain physical distancing and facial coverings. Limit gatherings to 50 people. Avoid specific practices that involve close interaction, touch, or shared objects. Continue wearing facial coverings.	Larger group attendance at religious services and funerals can be considered. If possible, continue to sit well spaced from other attendees and practice good personal protective measures including hand hygiene and wearing a facial covering.

Visiting Museums/Libraries	Not recommended unless virtual options or touchless curbside pick-up of books is available. Avoid if over 65 or in a high risk group.	In-person gatherings permitted, but with maintenance of strict physical distancing guidelines, thus limiting occupancy to less than 25%. Small groups advised. Look for activities and places where safe physical distancing requirements can be met. Limit trips to avoid unnecessary risk. Avoid all high touch or interactive areas or exhibits. Use facial coverings and practice physical distancing. Look for organizations with good cleaning practices and attendance controls to reduce crowds. Practice good hand hygiene if you must use shared items like a library computer. Avoid if over 65 or in a high risk group..	Attendance at facilities with moderate number of people (less than 50%) if desired, but still not preferred. Continue to avoid high touch areas and exhibits. Good hand hygiene should be used if sharing items like computers. Continue physical distancing as possible and facial coverings should still be worn.	Avoid crowded areas or peak times for facilities to reduce time spent in large crowds. Practice good personal hygiene and protective measures.
Using Personal Services (Barber Shops; Nail Salons; Hair Salons and similar services)	Not recommended.	Individuals should only visit businesses operating under strict hygiene protocols with hand hygiene, physical distancing, facial coverings, and aggressive cleaning of high touch services. Limit capacity to 25% occupancy (can use shifts to increase productivity). Service providers and customers should wear cloth face coverings. Avoid if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Individuals should only visit businesses operating under strict hygiene protocols with hand hygiene, physical distancing, facial coverings, and aggressive cleaning of high touch services. Limit capacity to 50% occupancy (can use shifts to increase productivity). Service providers and customers should wear face coverings.	Individuals should only visit businesses operating under strict hygiene protocols with hand hygiene, physical distancing, aggressive cleaning of high touch services, facial coverings and symptom monitoring.
Home Repair	Avoid non-emergency repairs. If emergency repairs are required, practice strict physical distancing from workers and assure all individuals practice hand hygiene and are wearing facial coverings.	Consider only emergency or non-cosmetic repairs. Continue physical distancing and make sure workers practice hand hygiene and are wearing facial coverings. Delay or exercise extreme caution if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Continue physical distancing and make sure workers are wearing facial coverings.	Continue physical distancing and make sure workers are wearing facial coverings.
Going to Gyms	Not recommended. At home workouts or walks/running recommended with physical distancing. Clean equipment before and after use. Avoid if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Not recommended. Only personal training or individual fitness classes with appropriate physical distancing, facial coverings and hygiene precautions in place can be considered. Outdoor fitness classes with social distancing and non-shared equipment should be considered. Clean equipment before and after use. Avoid locker rooms. Do not use saunas or spas. Avoid if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Use facilities with reduced number of attendees (<25% capacity). Implement aggressive hand hygiene, strict cleaning practices and physical distancing (spacing of workout equipment) strongly recommended. Continue to avoid locker rooms. Do not use saunas or spas.	Use facilities where hand hygiene is made available and strict cleaning measures are in place and seek to work out during less busy times. Clean equipment before and after use. Individuals should shower and change at home to avoid locker room settings.

Visiting Public Swimming Pools	Not recommended.	Not recommended unless strict protocols are in place such as swimming in lanes only or staying well-spaced within the pool. Do not use locker rooms. Look for facilities with good cleaning practices, avoid all high touch surfaces and practice good hand hygiene after touching any necessary surface like pool ladder rails. Do not eat in the pool area. Avoid if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Swimming should only be considered with physical distancing in pools. Avoid all group settings related to pool activity. Make sure lounge chairs or beach towels are spaced appropriately. Maintain family groups. Do not use locker rooms or other high touch facilities unless absolutely necessary. Continue good personal hygiene practices including hand hygiene.	Perform hand hygiene before eating in the pool area.
Participating in Individual Sports (Golf, running, etc.)	Use areas where physical distancing can be maintained and no equipment should be shared. Wipe equipment before and after use. Spread out times for appointments or tee times. Wear facial covering when golfing in groups.	Acceptable as long as safe distancing can be maintained and no equipment should be shared. Wipe equipment before and after use. Spread out times for appointments or tee times. Perform hand hygiene frequently. Exercise extreme caution if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Acceptable as long as safe distancing can be maintained and no equipment should be shared. Wipe equipment before and after use. Perform hand hygiene frequently.	Acceptable as long as safe distancing can be maintained and no equipment should be shared. Perform hand hygiene frequently.
Participating in Team Based Recreational Sports	Not recommended.	Small group non-contact sports like tennis could be considered in groups of 2-4 people, ideally within household groups. Avoid sports like soccer, baseball, basketball, football outside household groups. Practice good hand hygiene following activities. Clean equipment before and after use. Avoid if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Small to medium group sports with limited contact could be considered. Shared equipment should be avoided as well as locker rooms or group settings. Practice good hand hygiene following activities. Clean equipment before and after use.	High contact sports like wrestling should still be avoided. Practice good hand hygiene following activities. Clean equipment/mats before and after use.
Getting healthcare	Avoid non-emergency routine care such as routine physicals or dental cleaning; however, call your provider if you are concerned about your health for further instructions. Use telehealth interactions when possible. Exercise extreme caution if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Reduce unnecessary visits. Work with your individual providers to determine appropriate care. Use telehealth interactions when possible. Avoid non-urgent elective procedures. Exercise extreme caution if over 65 or in a high risk group.	Work with your individual providers to determine appropriate care.	Return to normal visits. Follow recommendations of your provider.

This Dallas County guidance system for the risk of activities that may put the public at risk of acquiring COVID-19 is based on guidance from the State of Texas and the CDC. The system includes four levels of risk: **red**, **orange**, **yellow**, and **green**. Local infectious disease specialists and public health experts will use the latest information on local disease activity to advise county officials on the risk level that applies. Specific indicators for relaxation of activity level include:

- A progressive decrease in daily COVID-19 hospital admissions in the county over more than 14 days.
- A progressive decrease in daily COVID-19 ICU admissions in the county over more than 14 days
- A decreasing trend in the daily number of COVID-19 deaths over more than 14 days

On the other hand, a progressive increase in any of these indicators might lead to moving back temporarily to a higher level of restriction.

Red is the level of guidance Dallas County functions under current shelter in place orders. It translates to STAY HOME, STAY SAFE, only travel for essential needs, and restrict activities and gatherings, enhances protections for high-risk individuals such as the elderly, limits food service, and suggests no personal care services. Each level of guidance after red becomes less restrictive and corresponds to improvement in the COVID-19 epidemic indicated by having fewer hospital, ICU admissions and deaths. After 14 days of improvement in these indicators, the risk will be downgraded from red to orange. Then if the metrics are met for another 14 day period the level can be safely downgraded from orange to yellow, etc. The goal of this system is to protect you and those around you from COVID-19 infection. **Green** is the lowest level and represents the new normal needed to protect the community from a return of COVID-19 and appearance of future pandemics.

The color-coded guidance system was put together under the leadership of the Public Health Subcommittee of the Economic Recovery Committee and the DCHHS Department, to provide specific direction to Dallas County residents.

Follow guidance – Public health and economic opportunity are linked. Residents are urged to strictly follow the protective measures of each color to maintain their own health and avoid a resurgence of the epidemic that would cause greater economic harm.

References:

<https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/opentexas/OpenTexas-Report.pdf>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>
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