

December 23, 2020

Imperial County
Public Health Department

City of Long Beach
Department of Health
and Human Services

Los Angeles County
Department of Public Health

Orange County
Health Care Agency

City of Pasadena
Public Health Department

Riverside University
Health System - Public Health

Santa Barbara County
Public Health Department

County of San Bernardino
Department of Public Health

County of San Diego
Health and Human
Services Agency

Ventura County
Public Health

**Southern California's Ten Local Health Departments
Send An Urgent Holiday Message To Stay Home and Stay Safe**

As a coalition of 10 neighboring California local health departments, we thank everyone for doing their part to reduce the spread of COVID-19. As the first doses of the vaccine are being administered across our communities, we can finally see a ray of light at the end of the tunnel. As that light gets closer, we are hopeful that we are one step closer to getting back to doing the things and seeing the people we all miss the most.

In spite of this good news, we know that the next few weeks and months are critical. We are now experiencing the worst time of the pandemic. Our case counts, deaths, and hospitalizations are the highest we have seen so far. Our ICU capacity is the lowest. We are breaking records every day, and not in a good way. Our systems are being overwhelmed, and the virus is spreading everywhere.

The impacts of this pandemic are starkest among our community members most vulnerable to this virus, including our older adult family and friends, our community members working essential jobs to ensure we all have the basic goods that we need, and those living in our communities who have the least opportunities for health. The pandemic has taken a large toll and exacerbated health impacts within these communities. We cannot continue on our current path without facing serious consequences for our families, friends, and the local businesses that make our communities such special places to live.

This is a critical time when everyone needs to do their part to defeat COVID-19. We understand that people are tired, but public health measures are not the enemy — they are the roadmap for a faster and more sustainable recovery. We must all commit to taking precautions and heeding public health protocols, including the current Stay-at-Home Order, to reopen businesses and schools, to travel to see our families and friends in person, and to celebrate that next important event.

We can do all these things again, but only if we all follow effective, fact-based public health measures like wearing face masks, washing hands, practicing social distancing, and only traveling for essential trips. Many of us are spreading the virus without knowing it—over 50% of exposures come from people who don't have symptoms—so we all need to avoid social gatherings and activities with those outside our household. If we do these things, in a few weeks we could start to see the numbers slow and the curve bend. We will help our systems increase their capacity to manage and end this pandemic. If we fail, our finest medical researchers are clear: there will be even worse consequences for our families and our economy.

We have all had to alter our lives this difficult year and we all want this difficult time to be behind us. But the virus is not done with us yet. If we can all just come together in this moment to eradicate the virus, and recommit to protecting ourselves and one another, we will get back to normal day-to-day activities more quickly. The roadmap to a faster, more equitable, and sustainable recovery for all of us means committing and coming together to follow recommended public health measures.

We are all neighbors in California, even if we live in different cities and counties. The virus knows no borders and continues to severely impact us all, especially at this moment. The end is in sight, and the light at the end of this dark tunnel will keep getting brighter but only if we all do our part right now. We all have a personal and collective responsibility to slow the spread of the pandemic and eliminate the virus as quickly as possible. Let's come together now for a brighter and healthier 2021.