

## Tips for visiting during the pandemic

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Summer's here, and in the past that meant having lots of visitors come share the fun in Ashland and the Rogue Valley.

This summer there's no Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Britt Festival, or Emigrant Lake water slide, but family can still come to visit and play, or you can go see family where they live. Here are some ways to make summer visits a bit safer, with the goal that no one is exposed to COVID-19.

Even though Oregon is now in phase two of reopening, health concerns remain, especially for older adults.

A good friend and colleague in Ashland recently figured out a way to see her adult children and grandkids. Everyone was able to quarantine themselves for 14 days before arriving. Once here, they all agreed to stay in place together. They did old-fashioned things like board games, baking, yard activities and singing. This might not be practical for everyone, so here are some other suggestions.

First, consider whether the risk of a visit is worth it for you and your family. No one can answer this question but you.

Next, talk to your family to see how they all feel about a possible visit. No one wants to expose their loved ones to a potentially serious illness. But in some cases, this never gets addressed ahead of time. If you feel some tension around this conversation, you're probably right. Check out their input in some detail and see what really fits best.

In order to feel safe, come up with real guidelines that everyone agrees to ahead of time. The basics, like hand washing, no close physical contact and wearing masks, if needed, have to be accepted by all. It's easier to avoid a conflict if everyone follows the agreed-upon rules.

Something to consider is how many people will be visiting you at the same time. If you're the one going out of town, how many people will you plan to visit? The guidance is that fewer people is the safer choice, so perhaps limit this visit to a smaller group than usual. The wish to see everyone has to take a back seat to less exposure.

I heard about a wedding in Ashland recently that was outdoors on a large property, with fewer than 20 people, all safe-distancing. They sent videos to others who didn't attend.

If a visit can be mainly outdoors, that's a much better option. However, in the summer with the heat or possibly smoke, it might not work. But indoors, the windows are often closed, with inadequate air flow. Clearly, choices have to be made.

It should be obvious that if anyone has been sick, they don't participate in a visit. Those we hold dearest to us need to be protected from our presence if we're not well. Everyone wants to be accountable to

each other. This can be an ongoing conversation, as it's possible that the health status of those in this family group may change.

There's even some guidance about hugging. Seems like we know we shouldn't hug in a pandemic, but this information is being refined for families and loved ones. In a June 4 article in the New York Times, a reporter interviewed Linsey Marr, an aerosol scientist at Virginia Tech and one of the world's leading experts on airborne disease transmission.

Here are the do's and don'ts of hugging. In all of these recommendations, both people are wearing face masks:

- Don't hug face-to-face
- Don't hug cheeks together, facing the same direction
- Do hug facing opposite directions
- Do let children hug you around the knees or waist
- Do kiss your grandchild on the back of the head

Whoever thought we'd need instructions on how to hug our loved ones? Here's why you might want to keep these suggestions in mind. According to the Aging Life Care Association, of those who have died from COVID-19, eight out of 10 were older than 65. That's a statistic to seriously consider. If you're planning a summer visit with your family, enjoy it with safe hugs and lots of fresh air, for everyone's sake.