Older adults and people with chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease or with poor immune systems or taking medications that affect the immune system are at higher risk. Talk with your medical team to figure out your risk if you aren’t sure of what precautions you should take.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to months of “Stay at Home” orders across the country closing businesses, places of worship, daycares, and encouraging people to stay at home to avoid the spread of the virus. Now that these places are slowly reopening, how do you decide how or when to return to these places or who to start engaging with in-person? This worksheet will help walk you through the decision-making process by helping you weigh out your own risks and benefits of interacting with others in public spaces or in your homes again.

What are you trying to decide? Who is involved?
Consider how many households and how much you know about their daily exposures.

Is the virus spreading locally?
For example, are case rates going up?

Do you have a plan if someone in your household gets sick?

Does anyone involved have higher risk for serious illness, or interact with someone at high risk?
- Yes, we have to consider someone at high risk.
- No, everyone involved is relatively low risk.

Does anyone involved have higher risk daily exposures?
- Yes, at least one of us has high risk exposures to consider.
- We feel our daily activities are all low risk.

What safety measures are reasonable for you, your family, and/or others involved?
- Physical distancing
- Staying outdoors
- Wearing masks
- No shared food/toys
- Washing hands
- Limit other interactions before and/or after
- Other _______________________

You can find county-level information at the WI Dept. of Health (DHS) website or through your local health department.

Consider the local case rate, trends, overall activity levels, whether there have been recent outbreaks, and whether there have been recent events or large gatherings that might lead to an outbreak. Consider all the households involved if you don’t all live in the same area.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has useful information about making a plan.

Older adults and people with chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease or with poor immune systems or taking medications that affect the immune system are at higher risk.

Talk with your medical team to figure out your risk if you aren’t sure of what precautions you should take.

Interactions are lower risk when they are short, infrequent, outdoors and involve fewer people. Safety measures such as wearing masks and physical distancing (staying 6+ feet apart) also help lower risks.

Consider work, school, shopping, leisure outings, and other activities. Talk to others involved about their daily activities.
It sounds like you have a plan to move forward! It’s a good idea to also talk about this plan with everyone involved, so you are all in agreement. Summary of plan for moving forward:

What are the possible benefits for everyone involved? Summary of the benefits:

- We all need social connection, and we also need a break from our responsibilities (e.g., caregiving, household upkeep) and time to ourselves.
- How would this interaction help meet your physical, emotional, mental, social, or spiritual needs? How would it alleviate stress and help you regain some balance in your life?

Overall, how would you rate the risks & benefits?

**RISKS**

1 2 3 4 5  
low risk high risk

**BENEFITS**

1 2 3 4 5  
low benefit high benefit

Do the benefits outweigh the risks?

Yes

No

- It’s okay to say no to an invitation or wait to change your routine. It’s also okay to make a decision and change your mind later.
- Continue to track the local situation, your own needs, and the needs of others around you to decide when and how to move forward.
- If you still feel conflicted, try breaking the decision down to two options. For example, should we see family this weekend, or not see them at all until next year? Then pick new options that are less extreme and try again. This exercise might help clarify what feels right for your family.
- It also might help to talk with your family or those you want to interact with about their own thoughts on the questions above, and how you can all feel most comfortable moving forward.

**REFERENCE LINKS**

1. [https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/local.htm](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/local.htm)
2. [https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/1h-depts/counties.htm](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/1h-depts/counties.htm)

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

For more guidance on what to consider and how to plan to move forward, use these resources:

- For families deciding about visiting grandparents or sending kids back to daycare, see advice from Emily Oster: [https://emilyoster.substack.com/p/grandparents-and-day-care](https://emilyoster.substack.com/p/grandparents-and-day-care)

If you think you may have been exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19, you can find more information about getting a test from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services ([https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/testing.htm](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/testing.htm)).