

# How do you dine safely with friends with COVID-19 around?

*Taylor Clysdale*

There's no way to completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19 when dining indoors, as bars and restaurants re-open their dining rooms in Peterborough.

So Dr. Rosana Salvaterra, medical officer of health for Peterborough Public Health, is advising people to continue to be cautious as fears spread that young people are passing the virus between them in Ontario.

On Tuesday, July 21, Premier Doug Ford [warned people to stop partying as cases briefly spiked in Ontario](#) as well as other provinces. This comes after the premier allowed for the re-opening of restaurants to dine-in services as a part of the third phase of COVID-19 recovery.

Dr. Salvaterra says while it's safer in Peterborough as [the city and county has gone more than a month without a new case](#), there's no way to completely eliminate the danger.

"Indoor activity poses a higher risk than the same activity outdoors," she says.

For those dining in, tables must be two metres apart, or have a barrier between them. As well, [on Aug. 1, you must wear face coverings in indoor public settings like restaurants](#), due to an order from the health unit.

Patrons must also remain seated at their tables, reminds Dr. Salvaterra. There's no bar service, no mingling and no dancing.

But when people drink, they can become intoxicated and perform unsafe behaviours, she adds.

Her most important advice is to maintain your social bubble of only 10 people, and those people must not be bubbled with anyone else. It's still not the time to call up a friend and go out for dinner, unless you're bubbled with that person.

"That is still not a good idea," she says.

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But that doesn't mean you can't share a meal with people you haven't seen in a while.

Dr. Salvaterra says she had a social gathering with people she isn't bubbled with, but it was outdoors and people were practicing physical distancing. As well, pre-packaged food was served and people were not sharing plates or utensils.

If you want to do a similar social gathering, Dr. Salvaterra says to consider getting a certified food handler to prepare the meal, and potentially bring plates and utensils

with you which you can take home.

Don't do pot lucks, buffets or any meals with common bowls or plates. If a meal is prepared for someone, it is plated with everything on it specifically for that one person.

"Everyone gets their own plate, there's no sharing and no touching," says Dr. Salvaterra.

As the province continues along its recovery plan, Dr. Salvaterra says she's spoken with vulnerable people who have felt more comfortable going out again. But everyone needs to follow public health guidelines to make that safer.

"I believe we can reduce the risk to the point people can go out and begin to enjoy some of the social pleasures and settings that were a big part of our lives before March," she says.



by **[Taylor Clysdale](#)**

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