Diwali key messages

**Overall safety message**

Diwali needs to be different this year. Peel’s case counts remain high and our test positivity is the highest in Ontario. The virus is spreading in our communities and every contact we have with another person could spread the disease. This includes at the mandir or gurdwara, your home and in the community.

This year, you must:

* Practice your prayers at home.
* Live stream services rather than attend in person.
* Decorate your home but celebrate with people inside your household only – do not invite extended family or friends into your home.
* Make your favourite foods and share a meal virtually
* Drop gifts off outside the door.
* Call your siblings and offer blessings over the phone or internet.

**Celebrating in person only with those who live in your home**

* Enjoy traditions like decorating your home, sharing delicacies and special foods, giving gifts, and prayers as you normally would with those who live in your home, or are essential caregivers.
* Numbers in Peel remain high and we must stop the spread of the virus by staying at home as much as possible. Only socialize with your immediate household and essential supports.

**Virtually join celebrations with those who don’t live in your home.**

* If you normally invite family and friends who don’t live with you to celebrate Diwali and Bandi Choor Divas, please celebrate virtually this year.
* Make a new tradition this year by eating only with those who live with you and your essential supports.
* For family and friend who live outside your home, take lots of photos and arrange virtual calls to stay connected during this festive time and maintain physical distance.

**Decoration and diyas**

* If lighting fireworks, always make sure you’re following the safety protocols of your municipality.
* Enjoy the fireworks only with those who live in your home and/or your essential supports to keep the gathering small.
* While being outdoors may lower the risk of COVID-19, stay safe by always keeping a 2 metre distance from others, wear a mask if it’s difficult to keep distance, and remember to wash your hands with soap and water when you return home.

**Prayers and places of worship**

* Practice your prayers at home this year. If going to the *mandir* or *gurdwara* is part of your tradition, check with your place of worship if the service will be live streamed or offered virtually.

**Gifts for family and friends**

* If you’re sharing gifts with people outside your home, exchange online gifts to avoid physical contact.
* If you are seeing them in person, keep the visit short and make sure you stay 2 metres apart from others for example, drop the gift at the door and take a step back when they open the door to receive your gift. Always wear a mask.