

## Covid-19 - Reducing risk now the key factor to less restrictions at Christmas

Imagine Christmas if we cannot travel, cannot see our friends and families because they live in another municipality. A daunting thought, but it could be a reality unless we all adopt an appropriate lifestyle now to avoid that happening.

Portugal like many countries is facing an unprecedented challenge in dealing with this pandemic. There are many laws and measures in place, which can sometimes be difficult to understand and remember. However, if we focus instead on why these laws are there, what they are trying to achieve and the responsibilities that we have as citizens in trying to combat this disease, the clearer in my view it all becomes.



The fact is the disease spreads through close contacts with people. Therefore, the more we reduce that close contact the less risk is that we will catch it, the less chances it will have to spread and therefore fewer people will die from the disease. The current laws focuses exactly on this, addressing various days, times and places where there are greater concentrations of people, with targeted measures accordingly.

For instance, the risk is especially high at meal tables when people are not wearing face masks. Although the law allows six at a table, the risk is three times higher than if there is just two of you. If you and your partner go shopping together, the risk doubles in bringing the disease into the household, rather than if just one of you goes unaccompanied. If you shop once a week instead of twice, the risk of you contracting the disease through a shopping trip, with many others in close proximity, reduces by 50%. Do we really need to go window shopping at this time in a busy shopping mall, for example, exposing ourselves to additional risk?

I know the above may not always be practical but it is the general approach I am emphasising.

Identifying risk and finding ways to mitigate that risk is part of our daily lives – ranging from playing games to undertaking financial investments. There are also risks of rural fires and the risk of crime, but we have become accustomed to these and take preventive steps accordingly. Covid-19 is no different - it is all about risk and I am sure no one wants to expose themselves to more risk than necessary, especially in a health crisis.

So, if in the next two weeks or so, when according to health experts we are reaching the peak of this crisis, the more we can stay at home unless necessary, the more we reduce our contacts with others, the more we ensure strict compliance with the wearing of Facemasks, social distancing and carry out hygiene etiquette, the more chance we will have of enjoying less restrictions at Christmas.

The decisions we make and actions we take not only affect us, but our family, friends and neighbours as well, not forgetting the impact on the national health service who are over stretched at this time. It is important to think of others by adapting our lifestyles more than ever at this critical period.

Remember if Santa Claus cannot travel between municipalities there will be few presents for everyone. The future is in our hands.

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