

Colder weather is arriving. What do we know about indoor vs outdoor transmission of COVID?

As autumn settles in and the holidays loom, it's worth pausing to ponder what we've learned about COVID-19 transmission over the last few months. We're now entering a time of year when many of us will want to bring our communities together, and when the cold and the dark can increase feelings of isolation. So how do we calculate our own personal risk, while also avoiding ... shall we say, bad examples? Just what are we in for this winter, anyway?

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[S]tudies have found that the weather's impact on the virus probably plays a relatively small part in controlling transmission. In [one study](#), exposure to UV radiation only decreased transmission by about 1 percent. Summer didn't make the virus disappear, and the chilly weather isn't, by itself, likely to drastically increase the severity of the pandemic, either.

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A database of more than 20,000 cases... found 461 that were associated with transmission in completely outdoor environments — predominantly crowded events like markets and rallies. Overall, only 6 percent of all the cases in that database were linked to events that were either totally or partially outdoors. The rest were tied to indoor events. That fact is actually why experts are concerned that fall and winter could lead to an increase in transmission — not because it's colder, but because people are spending more time inside.

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