

## LINKS TO RESOURCES FROM TODAY'S MEETINGS: NOVEMBER 16, 2022

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### TODAY'S TOPIC: NAVIGATING THE HOLIDAYS

[Click here](#) to see the slides from today's discussion on how to safely enjoy the upcoming holiday season.

### LINKS TO TODAY'S DISCUSSION

- [Five things to know about Evusheld](#)
- [Travel Smart, Travel Safe Webinar](#)
- [Fuel Your Energy and Find Your Balance Webinar](#)
- [CDC COVID Data Tracker](#)
- [Abstracts from the American College of Rheumatology Convergence](#)
- [Kidney Week 2022](#)

## VF Announcements for November 16, 2022

### Upcoming VF USA Vasculitis Tours

Kansas City Dec. 3

Pittsburgh Dec. 10

[Click here](#) to check out the list of VF Tours scheduled in 2023

### [Click here](#) to learn about other VF virtual support meetings

- Caregiver Support Group
- Parents of Children Support Group
- EGPA Cafe Zoom Chat
- Patients in the Workforce Virtual Happy Hour Chat



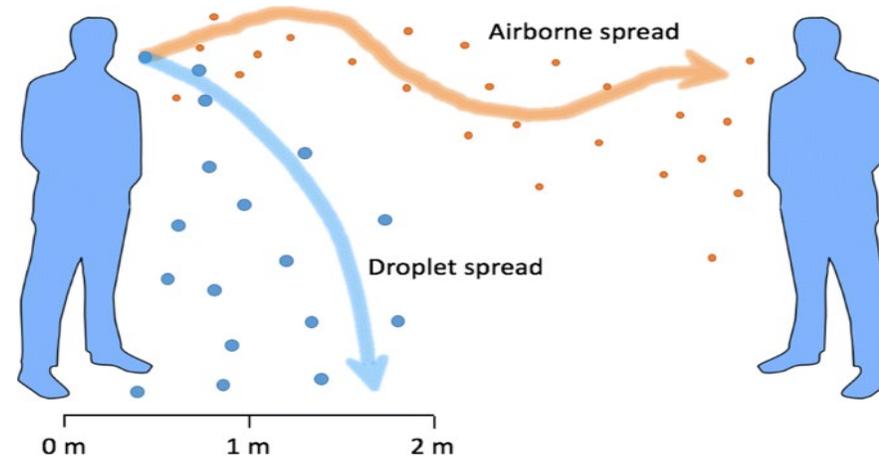
Celebrate Giving Tuesday by joining us for a fun, competitive online trivia game. No cost, [but you must register here.](#)

## Airborne

Super tiny (5 micrometers or less) disease causing organisms (pathogens) that remain suspended in the air waiting for you to breathe them in.

They can stay suspended in the air for hours.

Pathogens such as those causing tuberculosis, measles, and chicken pox are spread through airborne transmission.



## Droplet

Slightly larger pathogens (30-50 micrometers) that are spread when an infected person coughs, talks, or sneezes within 3-6 feet of another person.

Do not stay suspended in the air for as long as airborne pathogens. (Usually settle on surfaces within a few minutes.)

Influenza, whooping cough, and COVID-19 are spread through droplets.

Both airborne and droplet pathogens also contaminate surfaces. They frequently cause inflammation/irritation of the respiratory system so that you'll cough them out - thus continuing the chain of infection.

## Use what you know about how diseases spread to protect yourself.

### Good News

- You have to be exposed to a certain amount of a pathogen before you become ill. (Just walking by someone, typically won't expose you to enough of a pathogen load to cause illness.)
- Pathogens have to have a way of entering your body in order to cause an infection.

### Bad News

- Your nose, mouth, and eyes are an open door for pathogens.

### Really Good News

- There are several precautions you can take to reduce your risk of infection.

- Wear a well-fitting N95 face mask. An N95 face mask can help protect you from the smaller airborne pathogens as well as pathogens spread through droplets.
- Wash or sanitize your hands a lot, and practice, practice, practice (it is hard I know) not touching your face.
- Sanitize surfaces; especially “high touch” areas such as doorknobs.
- UV rays (from the sun) are harmful to bacteria and viruses. When possible, visit with others outside, on sunny, calm days.
- Keep your distance. Pathogens don't have legs. They can only travel so far outside of a host.
- Improve indoor ventilation. Open windows. Use good quality air filters and change them frequently.

Consider these-easier said than done-tips:

- Eat Healthy. There is evidence that spikes in blood sugar suppress your immune system. Avoid sugary foods and pair carbohydrates with proteins to help avoid dramatic spikes in your blood sugar.
- Get plenty of sleep and reduce stress. Lack of sleep and high stress levels can also suppress your immune response, and make you more susceptible to illness.

# Holiday & Travel Specific Tips

## When traveling:

- If traveling by plane, wear an N95 mask in the airport, while boarding, and during takeoff and landing. Once the plane is airborne, the cabin filtration system does a good job of filtering the air so you can remove your mask for short periods of time to eat and drink.
- Healthcare: Prepare before you go. Research the healthcare that is available in the area. Know how your health insurance works when you are traveling. Ask your healthcare provider what you should do if you become ill or are exposed to an illness while traveling. Ask your pharmacist questions about your medications such as what to do if you need refills while traveling, how to safely travel with medications that are required to be stored at certain temperatures, etc.

## When gathering with family and friends:

- Most diseases have an incubation period of less than five days. Ask your friends and family if they would quarantine for 5 days before you get together.
- Consider keeping visits short to limit the amount of time you might be exposed to pathogens.
- Ask your friends and family to take a COVID test before your gathering. COVID is not the only disease out there, but it is one for which we have a quick, at-home test available.
- Remember, friends and family are a big part of your support system, and spending time with them is important. While you should be wise and take precautions, most doctors and nurses agree that the benefits of spending time with family and friends outweigh the risks.

## In General:

- Know your limits and share your limits. As much as you'd like your family and friends to be able to recognize when you are having a "bad vasculitis day", they usually just aren't that astute. Some people find it helpful to use a specific symbol (wearing a certain color for example) to alert family, friends, and co-workers.
- Remember that your value as a human being is not determined by how much you can do.
- Front load your day and/or your travel plans and plan ahead when you can't. What is the most important thing you want to get done today? Do that first. If you end up not having the energy you thought you'd have, at least the most important thing is done. What two or three things do you most want to do on your trip? Focus on those, and if your health allows, do more. Do you want to attend a holiday party? Take it easy the day before as well as on the day of the party to conserve your energy for the party.

Stress and lack of sleep, as well as the tendency to skip some healthy habits during the holidays, can worsen vasculitis symptoms. And sometimes, even when you do everything right, you just have days when your symptoms are more severe.

The key to happiness is  
low expectations.

Lower.

Nope, even lower.

There you go.

Control stress and reduce fatigue by lowering the expectations you place on yourself. Think of the “why” behind certain holiday traditions, and then think of ways you can still meet those why’s that won’t leave you exhausted and stressed.

Let’s take baking for example.

1. Do you bake as a way of showing appreciation to friends and neighbors? Could you show appreciation by sending a short text to a different friend each day during the holiday season expressing how much they mean to you?
2. Do you bake because you enjoy it or because of the memories you have of baking with your mother, grandmother, etc.? Keep baking, but remember: you don’t have a quota to meet; it’s okay to make just one batch of one favorite; rest when you need to.
3. Do you bake because certain treats are traditional in your family? Could your family vote on the top 1 or 2 things they’d love you to make this season? Is it time to become the “manager” and oversee your family members as they do the work of baking?

# How Can We Support Each Other As We Navigate the Holidays?

Is there a holiday tradition/obligation that you worry will leave you tired/stressed? Maybe the group could help you find the “why” and offer suggestions for how you can reimagine the tradition.

Not gathering with family/friends this year? Maybe the group has suggestions for ways to find joy in the holiday season even when you can't be together with loved ones.

Share:

- Travel tips
- Tips for helping friends/family understand vasculitis and how it impacts your energy and your immune system.
- Holiday traditions that you enjoy.