

Why It's So Hard to Make Risk Decisions in the Pandemic

June 15, 2022

Over the past two years, I like to think I've gotten practiced at a type of wretched multivariable calculus: pandemic decision-making. The process starts with the blue bubble of a texted invitation or a date flagged on the calendar—a party Saturday, a sibling's high-school basketball game, a second cousin's middle-school Quidditch match, a cross-country flight for a grandparent's 90th birthday. Then other factors pile on like dog hair accumulates on a white couch.

What's the [transmission rate](#) right now and is that number even reliable, if it's reported [at all](#)? If I get sick, what's the likeliest outcome, given how long it's been since my last jab, age and other risk factors? How many attendees will be at an event? What do we know about the newest entry in our [ever-expanding](#) alphabet of variants? What is the CDC even advising about [masks](#) these days? Would I miss anything important if I caught Covid? How badly do I want to go?

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