

Sex during COVID-19 coronavirus

Can I have sex during the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak?

COVID-19 is a new coronavirus with no treatment or cure. People who have COVID-19 coronavirus sometimes get fevers, a cough, or have trouble breathing. Most people who get coronavirus don't get very sick, but some people do and might have to go to the hospital. About 2 in a 100 people with the virus have died around the world. Most people who get sick from coronavirus start to feel these symptoms between two and 14 days after they catch it.

Social distancing is the best way to prevent giving or getting the virus. Social distancing involves decreasing in-person contact with other people to reduce risk of spreading illness.

- **Stay home** as much as possible.
- Reduce the number of people you are around – the fewer, the better, but especially avoid groups of more than 10.
- Stay **at least 6 feet away** from other people. Six feet is about the length of a full-size bed.
- Think about ways to get supplies you need delivered rather than going out to stores. Ask that deliveries be left outside your door rather than accepting them in person.
- Eliminate nonessential travel. Skip social gatherings. Work from home or apply for unemployment compensation.
- Call people on the phone rather than visiting them in person to avoid getting sick or accidentally infecting others. Staying connected is important.

Is it okay to have sex?

It's complicated. COVID-19 is spread through direct contact with saliva or mucus. If you are having sex, the main risk probably comes from being close to someone (within 6 feet) and having direct contact with your sex partner, for example kissing and touching each other's faces.

However, there are still a lot of things about this new virus that we don't know. At this time, body fluids known to carry virus include saliva, other respiratory droplets (from sneezing or coughing), and feces. The virus has not been found in semen or vaginal fluid, but we don't know if it can be passed through sex. We do know that similar viruses are not transmitted through sex.

Sex and COVID-19

There are still ways to maintain pleasure and intimacy. Here are some ideas on how you can reduce your risk of giving or getting COVID-19:

- Masturbation will not spread COVID-19; this is your safest option. It's still important to practice hand hygiene by washing your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after (*sing Happy Birthday twice*). It's also important to wash any sex toys with soap and water.

- Avoid having sex with anyone outside your household. The next safest sex partner is someone who lives with you.
- At this time, it is still important to stay home and practice social distancing. If you do have sex with other people outside your household, limit the number of your sex partners.
- If you usually meet your sex partners online or make a living by having sex, consider taking a break from in-person dates. Get creative! Video dates, sexting or chat rooms may be safe and sexy options for you.
 - If you are a sex worker and continue to have dates, we recommend:
 - Screening your clients for symptoms.
 - If your date presents with symptoms, you are taking a risk continuing the date.
 - Cleaning/disinfecting your workspace thoroughly and after each date.
 - Shower thoroughly after each client and change clothes.
 - Resources for specific populations including for people engaged in sex work can be found at: <https://www.vitalstrategies.org/drug-use-covid-resources/>
- Washing up before and after sex is more important than ever. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Strategies for safer sex

- Skip sex if you or your partner is not feeling well.
 - If you or a partner think that you may have or have been diagnosed with COVID-19, avoid sex and close contact.
 - If you are not feeling well, you may be getting sick. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness breath.
 - If you or your partner are over the age of 50 or have a medical condition that puts you at higher risk for and more severe infection (including heart disease, lung disease, diabetes or a weakened immune system such as cancer or unsuppressed HIV) from COVID-19, you may want to avoid sex.
- Condoms and dental dams can reduce contact with saliva or feces, especially during oral or anal sex.
- Rimming (mouth on anus) might spread COVID-19. Virus in feces may enter your mouth.
- Don't forget about sexual wellness plan to prevent HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancy.
 - HIV: Condoms, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and having an undetectable viral load all help prevent HIV. For more information, or to order an at home test kit, visit www.phillykeeponloving.com
 - Other STIs: Condoms help prevent other STIs. If you are concerned that you have an STI or you are having symptoms of an STI, call your health care provider.
 - Pregnancy: Make sure you have an effective form of birth control for the coming weeks.