

## Sex and coronavirus (COVID-19)



### FAST FACTS:

- COVID-19 is not a sexually transmitted infection (STI), however, it can be passed on through close contact when you have sex or are intimate with someone.
- In some places, people are being advised to avoid sex with people they don't live with in order to avoid passing on the virus.
- Having sex with a partner you live with is OK, as long as you don't have any symptoms of COVID-19.
- If you or a partner have COVID-19 symptoms, you should keep your distance and avoid having sex for 14 days.
- There are lots of ways to have sexual pleasure, or to feel intimate with your partner, without getting physical- like masturbation, sex toys, and phone or webcam sex.
- If you decide to have sex with someone you don't live with, you should take precautions to reduce the risk of passing COVID-19 on.
- Sexual health services - including for family planning, contraception and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) - may be disrupted by COVID-19. Speak to your health care provider for more information.

## Is COVID-19 sexually transmitted?

COVID-19 isn't a sexually transmitted infection (STI). However, the virus is passed on through contact with droplets from the nose and mouth, including the saliva of an infected person, which can happen

through close contact with others. This means there is a high chance of passing on COVID-19 when you have sex or are intimate with someone.

There is also evidence that the virus is found in faeces (poo), so activities like rimming (licking around the anus) may be a way the virus is passed on.

Some studies have found traces of the virus in semen (cum), but more needs to be done to understand whether it can be passed on between people through semen.

## Can I have sex during the COVID-19 pandemic?

During the pandemic, many governments are asking people to stay indoors and avoid meeting up with people to limit the spread of the virus. Here's what you need to know about sex and COVID-19.

### Sex with someone you live with

If you live in the same house as a sexual partner and you both have no symptoms, then you can continue having sex (with consent) as normal for your relationship.

However, if you or your partner have any [symptoms of COVID-19](#) – a fever, dry cough, tiredness or loss of taste or smell – you will need to keep your distance from each other for 14 days to avoid passing the virus on. During this time, you should avoid sex or any kind of physical intimacy, such as kissing and cuddling.

If your partner is having sex with other people who don't live with you, your risk of getting COVID-19 will be higher.

### Sex without physical contact

Having sex with yourself (masturbation) has no COVID-19 risk and is one of the best ways to keep enjoying sex during the pandemic. You can also explore other ways to have sex with a partner without meeting up in person, like phone or webcam sex.

If you decide to go online, be aware of what you are sharing and who you are sharing it with. Remember to only do what feels right. Your partner may want to explore this new way of being sexual but you shouldn't feel pressured to share sexual content over the phone or internet if you don't want to.

### Sex with someone you don't live with

During the pandemic, some countries are asking people not to hook up or have sex with people they don't live with to limit the spread of the virus. Make sure you stay up-to-date with the guidance in your area.

### Limiting the spread of COVID-19 during sex

If you do decide to have sex with someone you don't live with, there are a few things you can do to lower the risk of getting or passing on COVID-19.

- Avoid kissing or exchanging saliva with anyone you don't live with.

- Avoid sexual activities which include licking around the anus, such as rimming.
- Use condoms or dental dams every time you have sex, including oral sex.
- Consider wearing [face masks](#) while having sex to lower the chance of passing COVID-19 onto your partner.
- Take a shower and wash your hands and body thoroughly with soap and water before and after sex.
- If you use sex toys, wash these thoroughly with soap and water and do not share them.
- Consider sexual arousal techniques that don't involve physical contact – like dirty talking or mutual masturbation while physically distancing.
- Reduce the number of sexual partners you have overall, and/or at the same time.
- Avoid having sex or being intimate with your partner if they are feeling unwell, or think they may have COVID-19.

If you are a sex worker, consider going online, sext or use videos and chat rooms, or taking a break from your business as usual activities if you can.

## High-risk groups and sex

If you have a medical condition that puts you at [greater risk of getting severe COVID-19](#), you should be extra careful in all areas of your life – including your sex life. You may want to consider stopping in-person sex or just having sex with one partner who lives with you and is also taking extra precautions.

## How can I access sexual health services during COVID-19?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some sexual health services may be disrupted. This includes services for family planning, [contraception](#), sexual health testing and [pre-exposure prophylaxis](#) (PrEP).

To limit the spread of the virus, many clinics may move to online consultations, suspend walk-in services, reduce hours, close or be referring people elsewhere. You can stay up-to-date with the services your local health centre is providing by checking with your community health worker, calling the clinic, or checking their website (if available).

## Contraception and family planning

If you are not planning on getting pregnant, make sure you have an adequate supply of contraception.

- If you usually use short-acting contraception, such as the pill, or barrier methods, such as [condoms](#), make sure you have at least a 30-day supply.
- If you use long-acting contraception, such as an IUD or implant, make sure you don't need this changed in the next month. Talk to your health care provider to make sure you can continue using your preferred method.

If you can't get hold of your usual method of contraception, for example if you need a prescription or you need to get it from a health care worker, consider using condoms until you can. Condoms can prevent both unwanted pregnancy and [STIs](#) and are available without a prescription.

Health systems should still be providing access to abortions (where legal) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, there may be some disruption to services. Contact your health provider for advice and information.

## HIV and PrEP

Preventing HIV is still important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Make sure you have an adequate supply of condoms, and at least 30 days' worth of PrEP, if you currently taking PrEP.

Some people on PrEP may decide that their HIV risk is low because they are having less sex during the pandemic. If you decide to stop taking PrEP, make sure you know how to stop it and start it again. For most people taking daily PrEP, you'll need to have seven sex-free days before you can stop taking PrEP so that your last sex act is fully protected. Check-out [Prepster](#) for lots more information.

# HELP US HELP OTHERS

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Every contribution helps, no matter how small.

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### Sources:

[World Health Organization \(2020\) Q&A: Contraception/Family planning and COVID-19](#)

[Planned Parenthood \(2021\) COVID-19 and Your Sexual Health](#)

[Mayo Clinic \(2020\) Sex and coronavirus: Can you get COVID-19 from sexual activity?](#)

[Prepster](#)