

Sex and coronavirus (COVID-19)



FAST FACTS:

- COVID-19 is passed on through droplets that come out of your mouth and nose when you cough or breathe out.
- COVID-19 is not a sexually transmitted infection, however, it can be passed on through kissing and close contact, including having sex.
- If you or a partner have COVID-19 symptoms, you should not kiss or have sex.
- There are lots of ways to have sexual pleasure without physical contact- try having fun with lone masturbation, sex toys, and phone or webcam sex.
- If you don't have symptoms, having sex with a partner you live with is OK.
- If you decide to have sex with someone who doesn't live with you, then you should take precautions to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.
- Sexual health services - including for family planning, contraception and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) - may be disrupted by the impact of COVID-19. Get in touch with your provider for information.

Is COVID-19 sexually transmitted?

Based on current evidence, coronavirus - the virus that causes COVID-19 illness - is not passed on through vaginal or anal intercourse.

However, coronavirus 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 significant risk of passing on COVID-19 through kissing and physical touching if one person has the virus. There is also evidence that the virus is present in poop (faeces), so licking around the anal areas (rimming) may also be a way the virus is passed on.

Can I have sex during the COVID-19 pandemic?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many governments are asking people to stay indoors to limit physical contact between people and the spread of the virus. Here are some things you should know concerning sex.

Sex with symptoms

If you or your sexual partner are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 – a dry persistent cough, temperature, or difficulty breathing – you should limit all close physical contact to stop the spread of the virus. This means avoiding physical intimacy, such as kissing and cuddling, as well as anal, vaginal, or oral sex.

Non-physical contact sex

Having sex with yourself, masturbation, has no COVID-19 risk and is one of the best ways to keep enjoying sex during this pandemic. You can also explore other ways to have sex without anyone physically present, including through phone or webcam.

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 live with

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

If your partner is having sex with other people who don't live with you, then this increases your risk of getting COVID-19.

Sex with someone you don't live with

During the pandemic, some countries are actively discouraging hooking up or having sex with people you don't live with. This is because there is a heightened risk of picking up COVID-19 or passing it on to others, which undermines public health efforts. See below for advice on what to do if you decide to have sex.

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, then you should be extra careful with all aspects of your life – including your sex life. You may want to consider

stopping in-person sex or limiting your sex to just one partner who lives with you and is also taking extra precautions.

Limiting the spread of COVID-19 during sex

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

- Avoid kissing or exchanging saliva with anyone outside of your household.
- Avoid sexual activities which include licking around the anus.
- Use condoms or dental dams to reduce contact with saliva or poo.
- Take a shower and wash your hands and body thoroughly with soap and water both 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 talking.
- Mutual masturbation while physical distancing.
- Limit your physical interactions by reducing the number of sexual partners you have overall, and/or at the same time.

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. It's important to stay up-to-date with your local health provider by checking their website or giving them a call.

Contraception and family planning

If you are not planning on getting pregnant, ensure 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 IUD or implant, make sure you don't need this changed in the next month. Talk to your health care provider to ensure continuity in your preferred method.

Where legal, the COVID-19 pandemic may also disrupt the provision of essential abortion 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 populations taking daily PrEP, they'll need to have seven sex-free days before they can stop taking PrEP so that their last sex act is fully protected. Check-out [Prepster](#) for lots more information.

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Sources:

[WHO](#)

[NYC Health \(PDF\)](#)

[IPPF](#)

[Planned Parenthood](#)

[Prepster](#)

[HIV Scotland](#)