

Sex & COVID-19: Get the Facts

The Allegheny County Health Department encourages everyone to physically distance themselves and minimize contact with others outside your home to slow the spread of the COVID-19. We also recognize the importance of sex for many people and that individuals will continue to have sex with others outside their household. Here are some ways to stay safe and reduce your risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19 during sex.

1. Know how COVID-19 spreads.

- You can get COVID-19 from a person who has it.
 - COVID-19 is caused by a coronavirus that can spread when you are within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 who coughs or sneezes.
 - It is also spread by direct contact with saliva or mucus.
- There's much to learn about COVID-19 and sex.
 - It has been found in feces of people who have the virus.
 - The virus has been found in semen, but we do not yet know if it can be spread from one person to another through semen. Currently, there is no evidence that the virus has been found in vaginal fluid.
- Many individuals have the virus and not know it due to mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.
- We know that other types of coronaviruses do not easily spread through sex.

2. Have consenting sex (a person's explicit agreement to have sex) with people close to you.

- You are your safest sex partner. Masturbation will not spread COVID-19, especially if you wash your hands (and any sex toys) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after sex.
- The next safest partner is someone you live with. Having close contact, which includes sex, with a small circle of people helps slow the spread COVID-19.
- You should avoid close contact, including sex, with anyone outside your household. If you do have sex with others outside your household, have as few partners as possible.

- If you meet your sex partners online or make a living by having sex, consider taking a break from in-person dates. Video dates, sexting, or chat rooms may be safer options for you and your community.

3. Take additional care during sex.

- Kissing can easily pass COVID-19. Avoid kissing anyone who is not part of your small circle of close contacts.
- Avoid rimming (mouth on anus) as this might spread COVID-19. Virus in feces may enter your mouth.
- Condoms and dental dams can reduce contact with saliva or feces, especially during oral or anal sex, which helps prevent the spread of the virus.
- Washing up with soap and water before and after sex is more important than ever.
 - Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - Wash sex toys with soap and warm water.
 - Disinfect keyboards and touch screens that you share with others.

4. Skip sex if you or your partner are not feeling well.

- If you or a partner may have COVID-19, avoid sex, especially kissing.
- If you start to feel unwell, you may be about to develop symptoms of COVID-19, which include fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath.
- If you or your partner has a medical condition that can lead to severe illness from COVID-19, you may also want to consider skipping sex.
 - Medical conditions that can lead to severe complications with COVID-19 include lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system.

5. Don't forget to take the usual steps to prevent HIV, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancy.

- HIV: Condoms, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), and having an undetectable viral load all help prevent HIV.
- Other STIs: Condoms can help prevent other STIs.
- Pregnancy: If you or a partner can get pregnant, please have an effective form of birth control on hand for the coming weeks.

Any questions contact (412) 578-8081 for more information!

