

Coronavirus – Social Distancing, Looking After Yourself and Others

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has affected people from many countries around the world. There are lots of people talking about it: health organisations like us, governments, the media, people on social media, your family and friends. When so many people are talking, it can be tricky to figure out what you need to pay attention to, and sometimes it is hard to understand the information you're being told.

Coronavirus is an infectious respiratory disease, caused by a new virus. Understanding the virus and how it spreads will help you to protect yourself and others.

The virus can spread through:

- close contact with an infectious person
- contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze
- touching surfaces infected with droplets from an infected person

People with coronavirus may experience:

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath
- sore throat

Symptoms can range from mild illness, such as a minor cough, to pneumonia. Infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

Looking after yourself by eating a healthy, balanced diet, getting regular physical activity, sleeping well and reducing stress is important all the time, not just when you're trying to avoid getting sick, so we recommend you keep these healthy habits in mind every day.

See below some of our tips to help prevent the spread of viruses, practice good hygiene and social distancing.

Good hygiene

Everyone must practise good hygiene to protect against infection and prevent the virus spreading.

Good hygiene includes:

- covering your coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue
- disposing of tissues properly
- washing your hands often with soap and water, including before and after eating and after going to the toilet
- using alcohol-based hand sanitisers
- cleaning and disinfecting surfaces
- if you are sick, avoiding contact with others and staying more than 1.5 metres away from people
- cleaning and sanitising frequently used objects such as mobiles, keys and wallets

Surgical masks

Surgical masks in the community are only helpful in preventing people who have coronavirus disease from spreading it to others.

If you are well, you do **not** need to wear a surgical mask. There is little evidence that widespread use of surgical masks in healthy people prevents transmission in public.

Vaccination

There is no vaccine for COVID-19, but there is one for the flu.

You should get your flu shot when it's available. Getting the flu and COVID-19 at the same time can make you very ill.

Social Distancing

What is social distancing and why is it important?

The COVID-19 virus spreads when one person breathes in droplets that are produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. An infected person can also spread the virus by touching a surface. If someone else touches that surface and then touches their mouth, nose or eyes they can catch Coronavirus. That's why it's important to try to avoid touching public surfaces or at least try to wipe them with a disinfectant.

Social distancing refers to actions taken to stop or slow down the spread of a contagious disease. This means maintaining enough distance (1.5 metres or more) between yourself and another person to avoid getting infected or infecting someone else.

School closures, directives to work from home, library closings, and cancelling meetings and larger events help enforce social distancing at a community level. This slows down the number of people being infected and helps prevent our health

system from becoming overwhelmed. This is important so we can deliver important, life-saving care.

One way to slow the spread of viruses is social distancing. For example:

- staying at home when you are unwell
- avoiding large public gatherings if they're not essential
- keeping a distance of 1.5 metres between you and other people whenever possible
- minimising physical contact, especially with people at higher risk such as older people and people with existing health conditions

What should I do? What steps should I take if I need to go shopping for food and staples? What about eating at restaurants, ordering takeaway, going to the gym or swimming in a public pool?

The answer to all of the above is that it is critical that everyone begin intensive social distancing **immediately**. As much as possible, limit contact with people outside your family.

If you need to get food, staples, medications or healthcare:

- try to stay at least 1.5 metres away from other people, wash your hands thoroughly after the trip, and DO NOT touch your face and mouth throughout your trip.
- Prepare your own food rather than going to a restaurant or getting takeaway.
- It's best to avoid the gym; but if you do go, be sure to wipe down anything you are about to touch, and once more after you use the equipment. Again try to keep a distance of 1.5 metres or more from others.

Here are some other things to avoid:

- playdates,
- parties,
- group classes and the gym
- sleepovers,
- having friends or family over for meals or visits,
- and going to coffee shops — essentially any nonessential activity that involves close contact with others.

What can I do when social distancing?

Try to look at this period of social distancing as an opportunity to get to things you've been meaning to do.

- Though you might not go to the gym right now, that doesn't mean you can't exercise.
- Take long walks or run outside (do your best to maintain at least 1.5 metres between you and non-family members when you're outside).
- Do some yoga or other indoor exercise routines when the weather isn't cooperating.

- Kids need exercise too, so try to get them outside every day for walks or a backyard game of cricket (remember, this isn't the time to invite the neighbourhood kids over to play).
- Avoid public playground structures, which aren't cleaned regularly and can spread the virus.
- Pull out board games that are gathering dust on your shelves.
- Have family movie nights.
- Catch up on books you've been meaning to read, or do a family read-a-loud every evening.

It's important to stay connected even though we should not do so in person.

- Keep in touch virtually through phone calls, Skype, video and other social media.
- Enjoy a leisurely chat with an old friend you've been meaning to call.
- If all else fails, go to bed early and get some extra sleep!

Check trusted sources for up-to-date information on the virus:

1. <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/coronavirus>
2. Hotline for non-medical information **1800 020 080**
3. Hotline for people with symptoms **1800 022 222**

It is normal to feel overwhelmed and stressed in these times. Use your normal stress management techniques, or visit our website and download our guide to supporting yourself mentally and emotionally.

Call us at the Crafter Medical Centre on 8272 5533 if you require assistance, advice or if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row and we will facilitate a telephone appointment with your doctor.

Additional Crafter Medical Centre Resources:

Patient Guide to supporting yourself mentally and emotionally during a pandemic

Looking after the wellbeing of your children and teens

Patient Guide to Self-Isolation and Self-Quarantine

How to wash hands