

PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE - ORGANIZING IN THE TIME OF COVID

Acknowledgements

This document was created by Sophie Simon-Ortiz, MPH (Human Impact Partners - HIP, as part of HIP's Public Health Awakened initiative) and Mia Herndon, L.Ac (Right to the City Alliance/ Homes for All) with medical expert consultation from Juliana Morris, MD, Seyi Akintorin, MD, and Damon Francis, MD. Thank you all for your generosity, keen eye, and thoughtful contributions. Special thanks to artists Cece Carpio & Melanie Cervantes for the use of their work in this document.

Medical Disclaimer

This a living document updated as new information emerges about COVID-19. Please check this [link](#) for the latest updates. This document is also not a substitute for direct medical advice. Please consult with your healthcare provider if you are experiencing any symptoms or have been exposed.

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Overview & risk factors: COVID-19

There are many ways to protect yourself, your families, and communities from contracting COVID-19. Although none can guarantee zero risk of transmission, if put into practice consistently and collectively, these practices will help minimize risk for everyone, especially those most vulnerable to the impacts of the virus, and control the spread of the virus within our communities.

We also recognize the ability to practice the safety guidelines outlined is very much shaped by peoples' contexts, which might prevent or make it much harder to practice them (i.e. essential workers in hazardous working conditions, folks in prisons/jails/detention centers). This is why we continue to fight as public health practitioners, collectively, alongside our movement partners to eliminate all barriers to health, and why we see all of our collective work for justice as public health work.

What is COVID-19?

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, a new virus that primarily impacts the respiratory system. In December 2019, the virus began circulating in humans. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

The most common symptoms are:
Cough - Fever - Shortness of breath
Sore throat - Muscle aches - Diarrhea
Loss of taste or smell - Chills



How is COVID-19 contracted?

The primary way COVID-19 is contracted is through exposure to respiratory droplets or aerosolized particles lingering in the air from a person with the virus, produced when they cough, sneeze, or talk.

- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
- The virus spreads easily from person-to-person and especially between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.



COVID-19 can also be contracted from touching infected surfaces or objects, although this is thought to be less common.

- It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object

"We continue to fight as public health practitioners, collectively, alongside our movement partners to eliminate all barriers to health, and why we see all of our collective work for justice as public health work."



that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

Risk factors

Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms or may not have any symptoms at all (called “asymptomatic”). Research continues to show that people who are older or who have certain underlying health conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and severe asthma, may be at higher risk for developing the more severe symptoms of COVID-19. Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities continue to disproportionately experience the worst outcomes related to the

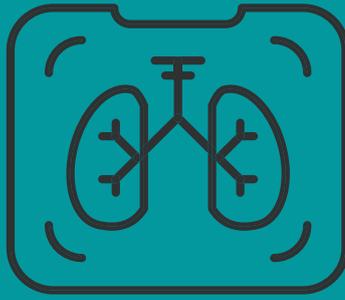


virus, including higher hospitalization and death rates. This is, of course, not due to any characteristics or behaviors of any one individual within these most impacted communities, but a result of centuries of injustices, disinvestment in public health, and inequitable access to health-affirming resources that support health (e.g. stable, safe housing that isn't cages, workplace safety protections, safe air, soil, and water, etc.). These injustices result in what public health refers to as “health disparities” that we already saw across a wide range of health conditions, which disproportionately harm Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, working class people, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, and other systematically marginalized people and communities.

COVID-19 is, shamefully, being experienced in the same way.

Overview & risk factors: COVID-19

Best protection practices - general guidelines



Risk factors continued

Public health emergencies like COVID-19 have historically increased xenophobia, scapegoating, and other racist targeting in the United States, which we continue to see today in the blaming and targeting of people of Asian and Pacific Islander ancestry in the US, and the blatant co-opting of the crisis to close off our borders to new immigrants and dismantle asylum.

While we continue to practice risk reduction and response to COVID-19 in the short-term, ongoing public health practice to end these disparities in harm means continuing our long game of centering anti-racist, transformative practices in every facet of our lives and fighting for fundamental shifts in every system and structure that has perpetuated health inequities for centuries in the United States and worldwide.



Best protection practices - general guidelines

Right now, there is no known means of prevention but a vaccine is being developed and tested (but likely won't be ready for distribution for another few months). Until then, physical distancing & sanitation measures are a MUST!

- **Limit exposure as much as possible** by physical distancing, avoiding touching surfaces, avoid touching your face, & washing hands often.
- **Avoid "the 3C's"**: Close, Covered, & Crowded spaces to avoid exposure.
- **Wear a mask - indoors and outside!** Masks are designed to catch the virus when it comes out of a person's mouth and nose. The best way to prevent exposure is to wear a mask or other cloth face covering any time you are in close proximity to anyone you don't live with -- whether you're inside or outside. If everyone wears a mask, it reduces the chance that you will be exposed to the virus, or that you will be exposed in high enough doses to cause an infection.



- **Best mask-wearing practices** include:
 - Don't pull down the mask to talk
 - Don't touch your mask with unwashed hands while wearing it
 - Wash hands or use hand sanitizer before you put on or take off your mask
- **Keep at least 6 ft away** from people you don't live with
 - 6 feet distance lowers the risk of virus droplets reaching you or others
 - Protects you AND others
 - You might carry the virus without knowing it
 - About 1 in 4 people who carry the virus don't have symptoms
- If you gather with people you don't live with, be sure to **meet outdoors** for the most airflow and space, and still wear a mask.
- **Wash hands** with soap and water (or use hand sanitizer)
 - Every time you get home from the grocery store, doctor's visits, etc.
 - Anytime you sneeze, cough, or blow your nose.
 - Anytime you touch objects or surfaces that others may have touched such as door handles, gas pumps, shared work equipment, boxes of take out, etc.
- **What's the best way to wash your hands?**
 - Wash for at least 20 seconds (long enough to sing happy birthday twice).
 - Wash the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your fingernails.
 - **Soap and water is best.** If you don't have soap and water, you can use hand sanitizer with **at least 60% alcohol.**

"Be sure to meet outdoors for the most airflow and space, and still wear a mask."





Other things you can do to protect yourself from COVID:

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- When you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or use your elbow.
- Avoid touching surfaces in public places such as doorknobs, handrails, etc. Try covering your hand with your sleeve or using your elbow instead of your hand.
- If you've touched surfaces with your clothing or been in a place with a lot of people, change clothes right when you get home and put them into the laundry without touching them to other clean surfaces in your home. Ideally also shower right when you get back home.
- Sanitize/disinfect objects and surfaces touched regularly (home and shared spaces)
 - COVID can live on most surfaces for about 24-48 hours, and longest on hard surfaces. On plastic and metal, COVID has been shown to be able to last for longer periods compared to fabrics, for example.
- If preparing supplies for community members (e.g. mutual aid), a best practice is to pack the materials 72 hours ahead of time, and leave them untouched until sharing.
- "Contactless" sharing/delivery is best (e.g. dropping supplies on a porch).
- It is not recommended to share flyers and other printed materials that involve hand-to-hand exchange.

"Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands"



What's the best way to use gloves?

- Gloves can be helpful in certain situations but only if used correctly, since gloves can trap and transfer germs just like your hands can.
- If you choose to wear gloves, sanitize or wash your hands before putting them on and after taking them off.
- When you have gloves on and you touch a surface that may have been contaminated with COVID-19, make sure to remove your gloves prior to touching other surfaces or objects, and especially before touching your face, your phone, inside your bag, etc.
- If you wear gloves while grocery shopping, using public transportation, or at certain jobs, you can consider keeping them on for the entire time, but try to limit the number of things you touch and be sure to remove them before touching your face, eating, or touching personal items.
- If you accidentally touch a personal item, like your phone, with a contaminated glove, remove your gloves, wash your hands, sanitize the contaminated object, then wash your hands again.

"Gloves can be helpful in certain situations, but only if used correctly, since gloves can trap and transfer germs just like your hands can."

How to safely remove gloves:

- Grasp the outside of one glove at the wrist, but be careful not touch your skin.
- Peel the glove away from your body, pulling it inside out.
- Hold the glove you just removed in your other gloved hand.
- Peel off the second glove by putting your fingers inside the glove at the top of your wrist.
- Turn the second glove inside out while pulling it away from your body, leaving the first glove inside the second.
- Throw the gloves into the trash immediately. (Don't leave them in the store parking lot outside of your vehicle or try to reuse them later.)
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer directly after you've removed the gloves.



Other actions you can take that can meaningfully support your health and ability to fight illness:

- Get good sleep, and prioritize your self-care. Sleep is critical to optimal immune function.
- Eat nutrient-rich foods and prioritize a whole foods based diet. Your diet provides the building blocks used by your immune system to fight illness.
- Stay hydrated. Water is at the foundation of our health. Clean/filtered water consumed regularly helps keep our whole system functioning optimally, including our immune system.
- Take precautions and prepare, and try to stay calm. An outbreak can be unsettling, but there's a lot we can do to prevent its spread. Prolonged stress inhibits immune function, so whether it is fear about the virus or excess stress at home or work, do what you can to give your system a break and restore.
- Exercise, self-acupressure, nutritional and herbal supplements recommended by your healthcare practitioner, qigong/tai chi, yoga, meditation, or whatever your "go-to" unwind must take priority right now. These are not luxuries. Take care of yourself. There are additional mental health and herbal resources in the resource list.



Additional Health Resources

- [Herbal Resilience Guide](#) prepared for the Sitting Bull College with guidelines for herbal supplements to support immune function. This does not replace the advice from your healthcare provider.
- Here are some [tips](#) on managing anxiety associated with the coronavirus. If you are struggling with anxiety or other mental health concerns at this time, please reach out to your healthcare provider.

REDUCING RISK OF CORONAVIRUS TRANSMISSION



@JuliaLMarcus, @EpiEllie, + Jonah Saffran

**BEYOND
RECOVERY**

#CancelRent #CancelMortgages

Guarantee Homes for All

cancelrent.us | Text HOMES to 33339





HOME ALONE OR WITH HOUSEMATES

- Stay home as much as possible.
- Try to allow only people you live with into your home.
- Wash your hands.
- If you're sick, stay home and isolate from housemates.



OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

- Wash your hands and don't touch your face.
- Stay at least 6 feet from people you don't live with.
- Wear a mask.
- Avoid shared surfaces, like swings or benches.



OUTDOOR GATHERINGS

- Wash your hands and don't touch your face.
- Stay at least 6 feet from people you don't live with.
- Wear a mask.
- Don't share food, toys, and other items, and avoid shared surfaces.
- Participate in events like these infrequently.



INDOOR GATHERINGS

- Wash your hands and don't touch your face.
- Stay at least 6 feet from people you don't live with.
- Wear a mask.
- Don't share food, toys, and other items, and avoid shared surfaces.
- Open windows for better ventilation.
- Try to avoid gathering indoors as much as possible.

Adapted from Julia Marcus, Harvard, and Eleanor Murray, Boston University

[IMAGE LINK](#)

Vox

Protests & Actions



COVID-19

“If people were to understand that racism, and all of the social and political and economic inequalities that racism creates, ultimately harms people’s health, they would see that protest is a profound public health intervention, because it allows us to finally address and end forms of inequality.” - Dr. Rhea Boyd, Pediatrician (in [TIME](#))

Ongoing evidence shows that [protests in recent weeks have not contributed](#) to increased rates of transmission of COVID-19. Many [leading public health experts](#) and institutions have publicly supported continued protests as necessary and just as much about protecting public health as taking COVID-19 precautions. That said, there are several best practices and precautions to take when engaging in protest.

BEST PRACTICES FOR PROTESTS

Best practices when protesting

If you do not have COVID-19 symptoms and plan on joining a protest:

- **Wear a mask** or facial covering that fully covers your nose and mouth. For extra protection, consider wearing two masks.
- **Eye protection:** Eye protection provides additional protection (always wear with a mask too), like goggles or face shields protect from virus exposure and teargas (for teargas, tightly sealed goggles). If possibility of teargas exposure, avoid wearing contacts (they trap gas).
- Bring **hand sanitizer** and use frequently.
- **Avoid sharing** drinks, carrying others’ signs, touching objects others have touched.
- **Bring your own water** (if possible, extra to avoid heat exhaustion) and food.
- **Maintain 6 feet of distance** whenever possible.
 - If protest involves direct action where you want to line up or be in closer formation (e.g. blocking an entrance or structure), consider maintaining connection through a barrier/connecting objects or materials (e.g. holding onto a shared rope, packing tubes, etc.) to maintain some distance. Consider also alternating the direction people face when locked together.
- Try to avoid activities that involve shouting or singing in close proximity to others.
 - Consider bringing drums, tambourines, or other instruments to make noise.
 - If chants or calls are necessary for the action:
 - Use a bullhorn or other sound amplifier to avoid yelling
 - Anyone touching sound system should wear disposable gloves
 - Sanitize the bullhorn between each use



BEST PRACTICES FOR PROTESTS & ACTIONS CONTINUED



- **Avoid standing near those who are not wearing masks** or face coverings if possible.
- **When you get home** (from any crowded place, including an action) change clothes and shower right away if possible. If you can, have a place either outside or as close as possible to the entrance where you can change out of dirty clothes to not bring them into your home.
- **Self-monitor for 14 days:** After attending a protest, monitor yourself for symptoms of COVID-19. If you have any symptoms, isolate at home and get tested ASAP.
- **If you are at higher risk** for the more severe symptoms of COVID-19 or live with someone who is, assess your risk and consider supporting the action in other ways (prep coordination, communication off-site during the action, etc.)

Traveling to and from the protest

- When possible, encourage folks to travel alone or just with members of their household.
- If folks need to drive with multiple people in a private or shared ride, follow all above guidelines (masks, hand sanitizing, leaving windows down etc.).
- If folks are using public transportation, always wear face coverings and use hand sanitizer after touching surfaces (or consider using a disposable tissue that can be immediately thrown out), enter through the back door, and maintain at least 6 feet distance between yourself, other passengers, and drivers/staff.

Role of the State - Minimizing Harm Through Collective Care & Mutual Aid

The less predictable factor in the protest scenario is state actors (e.g. police, jail officials), who in addition to the harms of violence they enact by virtue of their roles, have shown to **not** use best COVID-19 public health practices (e.g. not wearing masks, not maintaining proper distance).



Lawyer



Contact with law enforcement

In the case of arrest:

- If there is any possibility of arrest at the action, write in sharpie on your arm or other covered place the number of a legal hotline in your area. In many U.S. cities, the National Lawyers Guild is the best bet for action jail support and defense later (if needed). [List of National Lawyers Guild Hotline Numbers](#) around the US.
- Many other community legal support and mutual aid networks also play this role. Try to coordinate an action and jail legal support plan before the protest.
- In the event of an arrest, the best protection COVID-wise is doing what you can to minimize time in custody or detention and to limit exposure in confined spaces.

Call to action

Above information is adapted from the following detailed resources:

- [University of Washington Medicine](#): How to protest safely during COVID-19 pandemic
- Movement of Black Lives: [Protocol for Public Health Risk/Harm Reduction While Protesting](#)
- Black Lives Matter Seattle-King County chapter: [Protestor Safety Guide](#)
- California Nurses Association/National Nurses United (Video): [Protesting Guidelines](#)
- Hesperian Health Guides: Covid-19: [Health Protection & Security for Protests](#)

If any chance of arrest, try to coordinate an action and jail legal support plan before the protest.



Meetings & Member Engagement

Meetings

- **Best** to maximize virtual/distant meetings when possible (zoom, calls, texts, etc.)

If you decide to meet in person

- **Always with a mask, and hand washing** or hand sanitizer options available.
- **Best if outdoors** and with enough space to maintain at least 6 feet distance.
- **Best to limit numbers** about no more than 6 people to limit exposure overall and also reduce need to yell or talk loudly (consider cohorting groups, or staggering times for smaller groups in person then virtually reporting back across groups).
- **If indoors, ensure as much natural air circulation** as possible (windows open, etc.) and see below Office Spaces section for more guidance.
- **Food:** Always avoid buffet or potluck-style shared food and have folks either bring their own food for themselves or people they live with, or provide individually packaged meals.
- **Materials:** Avoid sharing materials as much as possible (pens, notebooks, etc.).

Member Engagement

1x1s

- **Best** to maximize virtual/distant outreach when possible (calls, texts, etc.)
- **Always** with a mask, hand washing or hand sanitizer options available
- **Best** if outdoors and with enough space to maintain at least 6 feet distance





Door-knocking

- Best to maximize virtual/distant outreach when possible (calls, texts, etc.).
- Always with a mask, always with hand sanitizer, use gloves if sharing materials.
- For in-person outreach, limit numbers of folks doing outreach together and keep people in the same groups consistently (or just pairs, ideally), to minimize exposure.
- Carry clean, unused, sealed masks to share with folks who need them.
- Ask that folks you're outreaching to put on a mask if they don't already have one on and stay at least 6 feet apart while interacting (for their exposure and yours).
- Whenever possible, ask folks to talk with you outside, if they can.
- In engaging higher risk community members at their homes, create options for folks to have additional distance as needed.
- Create ongoing roles for higher risk folks to support distantly to ensure equity in accessibility (calling members, supporting logistics for folks, etc.).

Additional Resources

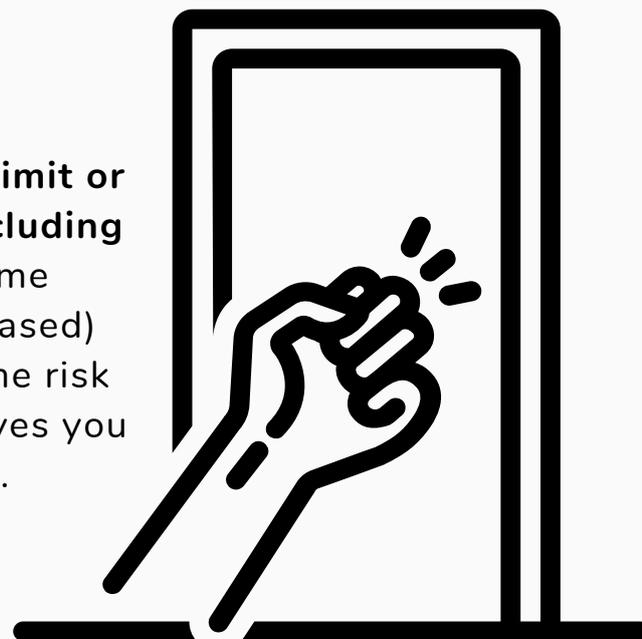
CDC: [Organizational Preparedness Guidelines](#) (info relevant to meetings, outreach, offices)

Office Spaces

Until there is a vaccine available, it is best to limit or avoid all together any indoor congregating including in office spaces. State and local guidance in some places where there are stricter (more science-based) guidelines, have placed office spaces in the same risk category as bars, schools, and gyms, so that gives you a sense of the kind of precaution level to follow.

If indoor gathering is deemed absolutely necessary for workplaces, there are several

aspects of the space to take into consideration for minimizing exposure as best as possible. Best practices also depend on the size of groups gathering, need and risk levels of folks who will be in the space, building



and layout specifics, the outdoor environment (i.e. outdoor air quality), and the type of work being done.

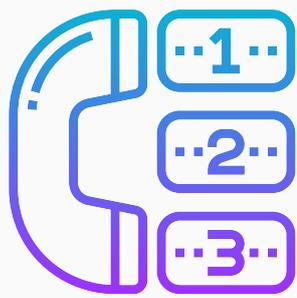
Recommended resource

A comprehensive but concise guide for workplace exposure protection from the California Department of Public Health and Cal OSHA can be found [here](#) with an accompanying [checklist](#).

Additional resources

Additional workplace guidance from [National OSHA](#) (includes regional worker safety regulators' contact numbers)

CDC: [Organizational Preparedness Guidelines](#) - general organizational guidelines that also includes information about organizational workplaces



What is Contact Tracing?

[Contact tracing](#) is basically detective work by trained public health workers to identify how and where COVID-19 is being transmitted and to try and stop the chains of transmission by supporting isolation of those who are infected with COVID 19 and quarantining those who have been exposed. According to [experts at Johns Hopkins](#), contact tracing "is the best tool we have to manage [COVID] in an ongoing way and allow our economy to open up again."

Contact tracing has been used in the field of public health for centuries to isolate infections like TB, measles, HIV, ebola, SARS and smallpox. However due to chronic underfunding, many health departments in the US had limited capacity to do contact tracing prior to COVID.

Experts estimate that [roughly 100,000 workers](#) trained in contact tracing are needed across the United States to keep COVID-19 at a manageable level,

which would mean hiring and training an additional 60-70,000 individuals, funding permitting. Recognizing that COVID disproportionately impacts those already experiencing structural inequities, some public health leaders are working to hire new contact tracers from BIPOC, lower income and immigrant communities to ensure culturally competent contact tracing and ensure that [community-based workforce](#) principles are embedded in community response and resiliency efforts.

If more funding is made available, these jobs may be great entry jobs for communities that grassroots organizers organize with. At the same time however, organizers should be aware of [if and how contact tracing may be connected to police surveillance](#), particularly for enforcement of isolation and quarantine.

To connect with organizations working to advance equity in contact tracing efforts, please connect with: <https://healthbegins.org/community-based-workforce-principles/>



Art by Cece Carpio