



COVID-19 and Your Sexual Health

What does COVID-19 mean?

COVID-19 is the name of the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 virus. For example, AIDS is the disease caused by the human immunodeficiency virus, HIV.

How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 can spread to people who are within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19. It commonly spreads from respiratory droplets in the air when that person coughs or sneezes but can also be spread through saliva or mucus. Unfortunately, these droplets can land on hands and surfaces and persist for days, so that contact with a surface that contains an infectious droplet can lead to infection if the hand touches the mouth, nose or eyes.

How does sex relate to the virus?

Fluids including respiratory droplets, saliva, and fluids from your nose are known to transmit COVID-19 and may be present during sexual contact. Much like the common cold or seasonal flu that has the potential to spread during sexual contact, COVID-19 does as well. Generally, most people would not want to spread their cold or flu with their sexual partner(s). We should treat COVID-19 in the same manner.

How can we continue to have a healthy sex life in a COVID-19 era?

At the moment, the CDC recommends social distancing (minimum of 6 feet) as your best defense against COVID-19.

- You are your safest sex partner. Self-pleasure is a great option and is a sure way to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Communicating with our partner(s) virtually (known as cybersex or sexting) is a great alternative that abides by the social distancing recommendation.
- Avoid sex with anyone outside of your household. If you have sex with anyone outside of your household, have as few partners as possible.
- Talk with your partner(s) and create a game plan on how you can limit your risk for COVID-19.

For further information on how you can prevent the spread of COVID-19, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>

Can COVID-19 be sexually transmitted?

COVID-19 has not yet been found in semen or vaginal fluid. We know that other coronaviruses do not transmit through sex either, however much is still to be learned about COVID-19. When individuals have physical sexual contact, it is very likely that the fluids that transmit COVID-19 will be present.

If two people who are negative for COVID-19 have sex, is there any way to get the virus?

The tricky thing about COVID-19 is that some who are infected will never show symptoms. Testing for COVID-19 is almost impossible to get for asymptomatic persons and takes days to get the result back. A negative test one day does not mean that someone has not acquired the virus the next day. In the way some people never show symptoms of gonorrhea, chlamydia and syphilis before passing it to their partner(s), some folks will never show symptoms of COVID-19 before passing it to their partner(s). Skip sex if you or your partner(s) are not feeling well.

Is it dangerous to be hooking up during this pandemic?

There are a lot of unknowns and we want to provide you the best answers on what we know. Talk with your partner(s) and understand how COVID-19 is spread. Use your best judgment and remember it is always about limiting your risk.

Does oral sex limit my risk?

Using the social distancing recommendation of 6 feet, oral sex may still put you at risk of COVID-19. Using condoms during oral sex can reduce contact with fluids that have the potential to spread the virus and will protect against other STIs. But unlike other STIs, condoms may not be sufficient to protect against COVID-19, since fingers coming in contact with infectious droplets can transmit the virus.

Can I use a mask and gloves during a hook up?

Leave the protective gear to the medical professionals and those who have the virus. Condoms and barriers can help protect you from COVID-19 in the same way they help prevent HIV and other STIs. Washing up before and after sex is more important now than ever. Remember to wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If you are using sex toys, remember to wash those as well.

Should we really stay home and avoid hooking up?

Social distancing is the best way to prevent COVID-19. Until more is known about this virus, staying home is a great way to prevent you from getting sick and stop the virus from spreading further. If you or your partner(s) are not feeling well, skip sex and find an alternative for the time being.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit:

- <https://fenwayhealth.org/care/medical/covid-19-information/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>