

Social Distancing

Social distancing is a term applied to certain actions that are taken by Public Health officials to stop or slow down the spread of a highly contagious disease. Since these measures will have considerable impact on communities, any action to start social distancing measures is coordinated with local agencies such as cities, police departments and schools, as well as with state and federal partners.

Here in New York State we have become acutely aware of recent social distancing measures. The New York State Department of Health in coordination with the Governor have enacted the following social distancing measures:

1. An Executive Order has been signed by Governor Cuomo closing schools statewide for two weeks.
2. Colleges and Universities have also closed.
3. Mass gatherings have been restricted: Visit the CDCs recent guidance here: [Mass Gatherings](#)
4. **Overall, Governor Cuomo is urging people to stay home as much as possible and to keep a safe distance of 6 feet from others in public spaces to reduce the spread of Coronavirus.**

With past infectious pathogens, science has determined that droplets containing a virus travel about six feet before they fall to the ground. This happens when someone coughs, sneezes or there is movement of some sort. It is key to note that the six-foot rule also includes the space surrounding a person. With regards to work, each worker must have a defined workspace around them of six feet in all directions. This space is to not be shared in anyway, this includes the items within the space.

Frequently asked questions: (from the *NYTimes* as of March 17, 2020)

I'm young. Can I continue to socialize?

Please don't. There is no question that older people and those with underlying health conditions are most vulnerable to the virus, but young people are by no means immune. And there is a greater public health imperative. Even people who show only mild symptoms may pass the virus to many, many others — particularly in the early course of the infection, before they even realize they are sick.

Can I leave my house?

It's OK to go outdoors. The point is not to remain indoors, but to avoid being in close contact with others. When you do leave your home, wipe down any surfaces you come into contact with, avoid touching your face and frequently wash your hands.

Can I go to the supermarket?

Yes, buy as much as you can at a time to minimize the number of trips and pick a time when the store is least likely to be crowded. Be aware that any surface inside the store may be contaminated, especially the handle of the cart.

Can I go out to dinner at a restaurant?

In general, avoid going out to restaurants. Opt for takeout instead.

Can family come to visit?

That depends. If everyone in the family is young and healthy, then some careful interaction in small groups is probably OK. Elderly relatives and others at risk should stay away, at least for now.

Can I take my kids to the playground?

Serious illness from this virus in kids is rare. But kids tend to touch their mouths, noses and faces constantly so parents, especially in higher-risk areas, may want to reconsider trips to high-traffic public areas like the playground. If you do go, playgrounds with few kids are ideal. Take hand sanitizer with you and clean any surfaces with disinfecting wipes before they play.

How long will we need to practice social distancing?

That is a big unknown, experts said. A lot will depend on how well the social distancing measures in place work and how much we can slow the pandemic down. But prepare to hunker down for at least a month, and possibly much longer.