

# Sex and Coronavirus (COVID-19)

All DC, Maryland and Virginia residents should stay home and minimize contact with others to reduce the spread of COVID-19

## But can you have sex?

**We still have a lot to learn about COVID-19 and sex, but here are some tips for how to enjoy sex and to avoid spreading COVID-19.**

### Know how COVID-19 spreads.

#### **You can get COVID-19 from a person who has it.**

- » The virus can spread to people who are within about 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 when that person coughs or sneezes – as droplets from coughs or sneezes spread COVID-19.
- » The virus can spread through direct contact with their saliva (or spit) or mucus.
- » COVID-19 has been found in the feces (or poop) of people who are infected with the virus.
- » COVID-19 has not yet been found in semen (or cum) or vaginal fluid (or cum).
- » We know that other coronaviruses do not efficiently transmit through sex.
- » It is important to avoid touching your face – especially your eyes, nose and mouth as germs can spread through these areas.

## Have sex with people close to you.

- » **You are always your safest sex partner.** This was true even when there was no risk of getting COVID-19. 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. Sex is a sensual experience, so consider exploring some of your five senses and get creative with it!
- » **The next safest partner is someone you live with who is also taking steps to prevent COVID-19 by staying home and practicing physical distancing.** Having close contact – including sex – with only a small circle of people helps prevent the spread of COVID-19. Only have sex with consenting partners and remember that consent is sexy.
- » **You should avoid close contact – including sex – with anyone outside of your household.** If you do have sex with others, have as few partners as possible.
- » **If you usually 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 are safer options for you during this time.

## Take precaution and care during sex.

- » **Kissing can easily pass COVID-19 since the virus can spread through saliva (or spit).** Avoid kissing anyone who is not part of your small circle of close contacts or people in your household especially if they have not been staying home and practicing physical distancing over the last 14 days – as symptoms related to COVID-19 can take 2-14 days to show up after an exposure to the virus.
- » **Rimming (a mouth on an anus) or anal play might spread COVID-19.** The virus has been found in feces (or poop) and may enter your mouth or be on your hands/ sex toys.

## Take precaution and care during sex.

- » **Condoms, dental dams and other barriers** like Saran wrap and finger cots can reduce contact with saliva (or spit) or feces (or poop), especially during oral contact with genital areas and/or anal sex.
- » **Washing up before and after sex** is more important than ever.
  - All sex partners should wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Pay attention to the length of your nails. Clean underneath your nails!
  - Wash any sex toys with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds and frequently disinfect storage areas.
  - Disinfect keyboards and touch screens that you share with others (for video chat, for watching pornography or for anything else).

## Skip sex if you or your partner(s) are not feeling well.

- » **If you or a partner may have COVID-19, avoid sex and avoid kissing** as COVID-19 can spread through contact with saliva (or spit).
- » **If you start to feel unwell, you may be about to develop symptoms of COVID-19.** They include fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath.
- » **If you or your partner has a medical condition that can lead to more severe COVID-19,** you may also want to skip sex.
  - Medical conditions include lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, sickle cell, cancer or a weakened immune system (for example, having unsuppressed HIV and a low CD4 count).

## Prevent HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancy.

» Call our Whitman-Walker Health team at **202.797.4439** with any questions around **COVID-19** or sexual health including **HIV, STIs and pregnancy.**

- **HIV:** Condoms, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and having an undetectable viral load all help prevent HIV.
- **STIs:** Condoms, dental dams and other barriers can help prevent STIs. Consider using lube as this will help decrease friction and decrease tears and cuts during sex. Tears and cuts in the anus, throat and genital area can be the easiest ways to transmit HIV and STIs. If you are experiencing symptoms of an STI or have a known exposure to an STI, call our team at 202.745.6175.
- **PREGNANCY:** If you are trying to prevent unplanned pregnancy, make sure you have an effective form of birth control for the coming weeks. Preventive pregnancy measures and abortions may be more difficult to access than usual during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whitman-Walker pharmacies offer delivery services for prescriptions. Contact our pharmacies at **866.724.1805** or visit **[whitmanwalkerpharmacy.com](http://whitmanwalkerpharmacy.com)** to get started.

\*Adapted from the NYC Health Department's "Sex and Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)" document. These recommendations may change as the situation evolves. Copyright © 2020 Whitman-Walker Health.