

INFO SHEET:

Sex, intimacy and coronavirus



How does COVID-19 (coronavirus) spread?

COVID-19, a disease caused by coronavirus, spreads mostly from person-to-person contact through viral particles dispersed through the mouth by coughing, sneezing, laughing, singing or talking. People within about 1.5 metres can be infected if these particles reach their mouth, nose or eyes. Additionally, the virus can spread by touching surfaces or objects where the virus is present and then touching your mouth or face. The virus cannot carry over long distances in the air, so until otherwise recommended, we can all go about our lives pretty close to as normal as possible. What's normal for many in our communities is to have sex, and we recognise that sex will still happen.

What does this mean for sex?

We know the virus that causes COVID-19 is transmitted during close contact. If you're having sex with someone, you're going to be in close contact with them. Sex is the very definition of close contact.

COVID-19 is not an STI but obviously, it can be transmitted during sex.

Can you get COVID-19 by kissing someone?

Coronaviruses are not usually sexually transmitted, although as the virus is present in the mouth, it makes sense that kissing carries a strong likelihood of picking up or passing on COVID-19.

What about rimming?

You may have seen talk online about rimming as there is some research that suggests the virus is present anally. While [this research](#) suggests viral material is present in stools, it doesn't appear to be infectious. But obviously, if you are rimming, you're probably engaged in other activities (involving saliva) that are a potential risk for picking up or passing on COVID-19.

How can I reduce my risk during sex?

To reduce your risk, some actions you can consider are:

Solo sexuality: Masturbation and self pleasure can be safely enjoyed by all of us at any time. Revisit your favourite porn, or peruse for some new and exciting material.

Online sex: Separated from your partner or sexual networks? Facetime doesn't have to be *just* for faces. Connect with each other via photo sharing, webchat, or on the apps. You can use Zoom or Skype to help everyone come together without coming together. These are also a great way to help combat social isolation.

Digital safety disclaimer: Always [be mindful of what you post online](#), and keep digital consent mutual.

Talk dirty to me: Whether its online sex or phone sex, you can heat things up by choosing the right words. If you need some encouragement on how to talk dirty, HuffPost offer some tips with [How to talk dirty without being Awkward](#).

Toys, toys, toys: Sex toys can be a great way to add variety if you're playing solo. Always make sure to keep up good toy hygiene.

Do the washing up: If you're having sex with casual partners, good hygiene including hand washing before and after a session is proven to help prevent the spread of viruses and bacteria.

Buddy up: Have you thought about a buddy system? Reduce your risk by making your sexual network smaller. Team up with a regular partner to keep your sex life humming. Or, if you have a tight knit group, plan to just have sex among each other. Keep each other informed if that changes, or if you feel unwell.

Drugs, tobacco and your health

Drugs and tobacco are common for many of us in LGBTIQ communities. Some people use drugs as a way to enhance sexual pleasure.

Many drugs can impact your immune system's ability to fight viruses, and the more you use, the more this is true. Consider reducing your use. If you continue using there are ways to do so to lessen your risk

Drugs that are smoked or inhaled may impact your respiratory system and affect your ability to recover from the virus if you get it.

If you're considering quitting cigarettes, now would be a good time to act. Quit offers support and has more information about [coronavirus and smoking](#).

BYO

It's a good idea to BYO for any drugs or equipment that are usually shared (joints, cigarettes, dosing equipment, pipes, banknotes, straws, poppers bottles etc.), and keep them to yourself. Label your stuff where you can.

Safe injecting

[Avoid sharing injecting equipment when using](#). If you're injecting, keep a good stock of clean fits and equipment just in case your local Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) has to close. Check out your local NSP, some of which are 24 hrs or may even deliver.

Staying healthy

Maintaining good general health will give your immune system the best chance at fighting off the virus if you get it. Maintaining a good sleep pattern, hygiene, diet, and exercise where possible are ways to keep healthy - and also improve mental health and wellbeing.

Let them know

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include:

- fever
- flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue
- shortness of breath

While regular colds and flu continue to circulate, having any of these symptoms is not a guarantee of having coronavirus. However, as more people in our communities are affected the likelihood of it being COVID-19 will increase. If you feel the need to self-isolate based on your symptoms or exposure, let your sexual partners from the last two weeks know.

Keep kind and carry on

Obviously, this is not the first time our community has faced a health issue that has impacted our sexual pleasure and wellbeing. We are incredibly good at adopting effective health strategies - and that will be true of COVID-19. Let's look out for ourselves and each other in a difficult time.

For more information go to your local state health department website.

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