



Lovers in a Dangerous Time: Sex and COVID-19

We can slow the spread of COVID-19 through social & physical distancing. What does this mean for sexual activity and relationships?

Back to basics...

- COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV2). It may result in mild or severe illness including cough, fever, and in more severe cases difficulty breathing and the need for hospitalization.
- The virus spreads mainly through contact with respiratory droplets from an infected person when they cough, sneeze, or breathe.
- An infected person may or may not have symptoms but they can spread the virus **even if they don't have symptoms**.
- The virus can also live on surfaces. This means that it can spread if a person touches a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Although COVID-19 has not been found in vaginal secretions or semen, sexual contact with a partner by its nature involves physical closeness (usually closer than 2 metres or 6 feet!) that could transmit COVID-19 if one partner is infected.

Can you have sex? Yes you can!

Here are some tips to avoid getting or spreading COVID-19.

1. Have sex with people close to you.

- **You are your safest sex partner!** Take advantage of the chance to get (re)acquainted with your body and have some fun. Remember to wash your hands & any toys with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Do NOT use hand sanitizer on toys or your genitals!
- **The next safest partner is a consenting partner that you live with.** If you are isolating together and neither of you have symptoms and are not at high risk of exposure to Covid-19*, you should be okay having sex. In line with national & provincial social distancing recommendations, physical sexual activity should only occur with a consenting partner with whom you live.

2. But I don't live with my partner(s). Does sex count as essential travel?

- You should respect guidance on social and physical distancing. This includes avoiding sex with someone who doesn't live with you.
- If you choose not to follow that advice, please consider minimizing travel back and forth (can one of you stay over for a few nights?)
- If you plan to travel, consider making this exception for only one partner to limit potential spread of COVID-19 (wait to see other partners post-COVID)

- In this digital age (and with consent) you may find other ways to connect without being in the same room such as by text, DM, phone, video encounter, or if you are really patient, by mail (ok, that was a joke but still a possibility!).
- **If you, your partner(s), or family members you are isolating with have medical conditions** that increase the risk of having severe complications from COVID-19, avoid sex with anyone outside your home

3. Do your own screening to protect yourself and your partner by asking your partners about symptoms of infection or potential exposures.

- If you are thinking about having sex or other sexual relations with someone who also wants to have sex, ask them if they have symptoms of COVID-19 infection *or* are at high risk of being exposed to the virus or being a carrier
 - Do they have any cold or flu symptoms (cough, fever, short of breath)?
 - Have they travelled anywhere in the past 14 days?
 - Have they been exposed or in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 or had symptoms?
 - Do they work in a profession that exposes them to individuals who may have COVID-19 (eg: healthcare workers)?
- *Even if they pass today, ask again next time, especially if you don't live together!*
- Consider that you may infect your partner if you have COVID-19, even if you don't have symptoms, and inform your partner about this risk.
- **If you feel unwell or have tested positive for COVID-19**, follow recommendations for isolation & quarantine, which includes avoiding sex with your partner(s)

Remember, someone who is COVID-19 positive may not even have any symptoms but they can still transmit the infection. You may never know if your partner is positive.

The bottom line...

- Limit sexual contact to consenting individuals within the home.
- Do not have sexual relations with a partner who has symptoms of COVID-19 infection or who is known COVID-19 positive.
- COVID-19 is not the only infectious agent to think about! Continue to use condoms to prevent transmission of sexually-transmitted infections and an effective method of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy

Sex without a partner or with a partner that you live with who has no symptoms and has not been exposed to COVID-19 are the best ways to stay sexual during the COVID-19 pandemic

Stay safe & up to date with trusted resources:

- <https://sogc.org/en/-COVID-19/en/content/COVID-19/COVID-19.aspx?hkey=4e808c0d-555f-4714-8a4a-348b547dc268>

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- Local and provincial regulated websites

Disclaimer: This document is intended to provide general information about safer sexual practices in the context of the pandemic, however you should consult your public health authority as regulations around travel and social distancing are changing rapidly.