

Sex and Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)

Let us answer some questions during this time of **SOCIAL DISTANCING**. While these tips and topics might not apply to everyone at this moment in time, sexuality is a normal, healthy human response expressed across the lifespan.

How does COVID-19 spread in an intimate setting?

- 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 through coughing and sneezing.
- The virus is spread through contact with respiratory droplets: so, we can assume moisture from the mouth and nose is infectious – close contact during some sexual acts involves these body parts.

We still have a lot to learn about COVID-19 and sex.

- COVID-19 has been found in feces of people who are infected with the virus.
- COVID-19 has not yet been found in semen or vaginal fluid.
- We know that other coronaviruses do not efficiently transmit through sex.

But, can I have sex if choose to?

Here are some tips for safer sex to avoid spreading COVID-19

Have sex with people close to you.

- **You are your safest sex partner.** Masturbation is healthy and 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.
- **The next safest partner is someone you live with (consenting, age-appropriate partner).** Having close contact – including sex – with only a small circle of people helps prevent spreading COVID-19.
- **You should avoid close contact – including sex – with anyone outside your household.** If you do have sex with others, have as few partners as possible.
- **If you usually meet your sex partners online,** consider taking a break from in-person dates. Video dates, texting, or chat rooms may be options for you.

Take care during sex.

- **Kissing can easily pass COVID-19.** Avoid kissing anyone who is not part of your small circle of close contacts.
- **Mouth to anus sex MIGHT spread COVID-19.** Virus in feces may enter your mouth.
- **Condoms and dental dams can reduce contact with saliva or feces,** especially during oral or anal sex. (No dental dam? Non-microwaveable Saran wrap works!)
- **Washing before and after sex is more important than ever.**

Skip sex if you or your partner is not feeling well.

- **If you or a partner may have COVID-19**, avoid sex and especially kissing.
- **If you feel unwell**, you may be developing symptoms of COVID-19, which includes 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 want to skip sex altogether.
 - These medical conditions include lung disease, heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer or a weakened immune system. This includes unsuppressed HIV and a low CD4 count.

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

- **HIV:** Condoms, dental dams, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and having and undetectable viral load all help prevent HIV. **Need PrEP? We can help you get started here at the Galion City Health Department.**
- **Other STIs:** Condoms and other barriers help prevent STIs. We can provide condoms free of charge, with instructions for use. **Call and we will gladly have some for you to pick up.**
- **Symptoms of an STI?** Our nurse practitioner will see you. We offer testing and treatment in our department to keep you safe. **Call for availability (419) 468-1075**
- **Pregnancy:** Make sure you have an effective method of birth control if you are not seeking pregnancy. **Reach out to us; we can help with shorter term methods including pills, the patch, Nuvaring, and Depo Provera injections.**
- **Currently pregnant?** Follow the advice of your OB, continue prenatal care as advised and maintain your health, for you and your baby.

Takeaway points: Practice safer, consensual sex; practice good hygiene habits, stay home when you are sick and avoid contact with others who are sick. We are here to protect your sexual health at the Galion City Health Department. Call today (419) 468-1075

Galion City Health Department Sexual Health Clinic <https://galionhealth.org/sexualhealthclinic/>

COVID-19 information in Ohio <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/>

National Domestic Violence Hotline Call 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224