

COVID-19: Myths Versus Facts

Myths about social distancing and masks

Myth: *If I am outdoors, I do not need to practice social distancing.*

Fact: While it is less likely that you will catch COVID-19 in open areas, it is still important to stay at least 6 feet away from others. Some people with COVID-19 have no symptoms and can spread the disease through respiratory droplets.

Myth: *If I and everyone around me are wearing cloth face coverings, there's no need to practice social distancing.*

Fact: Wearing a cloth face covering is NOT a replacement for social distancing. Whenever you are outside your home or around anyone outside your immediate household circle, you should stay 6 feet away from others. Doing both provides two layers of protection against the spread of COVID-19.

Myth: *If I and everyone around me are social distancing, there's no need to use cloth face covering.*

Fact: As stated above, wearing a cloth face covering provides an extra layer of protection against the spread of COVID-19.

Myth: *A cloth face covering doesn't block the virus. I need a surgical mask or special "N95" mask.*

Fact: Experiments have shown that various coverings, including folded bandannas and cloth face coverings, block respiratory droplets.

Myth: *Face coverings don't prevent the spread of COVID-19 or other diseases.*

Fact: Coverings can stop the evaporation of droplets that carry viruses so they fall quickly instead of traveling on a forward path and floating in the air. Further, droplets get far less momentum and can't travel as far when exhalation is blocked by a mask.

Myth: *There's no research to support the recommendation to wear a face covering to prevent COVID-19.*

Fact: More and more research has shown that face coverings prevent the spread of COVID-19. Based on emerging research, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said cloth face coverings could reduce the spread of the disease, particularly when used universally within communities.

Myth: *The tighter my mask is, the better it will prevent COVID-19 spread.*

Fact: A mask should fit snugly but still allow for ease of breathing and space to catch droplets. If a mask is

too tight, there is a risk that respiratory droplets will be forced through the openings at the side of the mask.

Myth: *I only have to wear a mask if I am in a high-risk county.*

Fact: Wearing facial coverings has been mandated across Ohio in any indoor location that is not a residence; outdoors whenever it is not possible to stay at least 6 feet away from people of a different household; when waiting for, riding, driving, or operating public transportation, a taxi, a private car service, or a ride sharing vehicle. (This does not apply to private or rental vehicles in which members of a single family are sharing a vehicle or to vehicles travelling through a listed county without stopping in that county.) There are a number of exceptions in the order, which you can find [here](#).

Myths about who gets COVID-19 and transmission

Myth: *Young people do not get COVID-19, only older people and people with other medical conditions are at risk.*

Fact: Older adults and people with serious chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of serious illness. But anyone can become sick, and symptoms can range from mild to severe regardless of how old you are or if you have other medical conditions.

Myth: *I won't catch the virus that causes COVID-19 if I don't spend a long time next to someone who has it.*

Fact: While being around a person with the virus for longer periods increases your risk, it is possible you could catch the virus if you inhale the person's infected respiratory droplets, regardless of the length of time you are together. You are considered exposed if, over a 24-hour period, you spend at least 15 minutes within 6 feet of someone with COVID-19.

Myth: *As long as I wash my hands a lot or use sanitizer, I'm safe.*

Fact: COVID-19 is spread through the respiratory droplets (saliva/spit or mucus/snot) of an infected person. When a person talks, sings, yells, sneezes, coughs, etc. the droplets are released into the surrounding environment. If you inhale those droplets, you could become infected. Washing or sanitizing hands is extremely important, but masking and staying away from others are also critical prevention methods. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also recommends cleaning frequently touched surfaces (like light switches, handles and railings) every day in case the virus — after it is exhaled by an infected person — can live on surfaces and possibly be transmitted to a person who touches that surface.

Myth: *If I go to a hospital for another reason, I will get COVID-19.*

Fact: Hospitals in Ohio are taking precautions and using provisions to separate patients with COVID-19 from other patients. Before going to a hospital, contact your doctor for guidance on your specific situation.

Myth: *COVID-19 spreads through food.*

Fact: There is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food. It may be possible

that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object, like a packaging container, that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. In general, because of poor survivability of coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from food products or packaging.

Myth: *I can get COVID-19 from my pet.*

Fact: Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low. A small number of pets worldwide, including cats and dogs, have been reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, mostly after close contact with people with COVID-19.

Myth: *COVID-19 can be spread by mosquitoes.*

Fact: There has been no information or evidence to suggest that COVID-19 could be transmitted by mosquitoes. The respiratory virus spreads primarily through droplets from coughing or sneezing.

Myths about symptoms

Myth: *If I have COVID-19, I'll know it.*

Fact: While some people get critically ill with COVID-19, many have no symptoms at all. People with or without symptoms can pass the virus that causes the disease on to others.

Myth: *Having COVID-19 is just like having the flu.*

Fact: The virus that causes COVID-19 can lead to some flu-like symptoms, such as body aches, fever, and cough, and both can also lead to pneumonia. However, COVID-19 is more serious and estimates show it has a much higher mortality rate than flu.

Myth: *If I don't have a cough, I don't have COVID-19.*

Fact: While many people with COVID-19 will have a cough, there are several other symptoms to watch out for. You may have the disease if you have any one or more of the following: Fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea.

Myths about public health

Myth: *COVID-19 is a hoax.*

Fact: Millions of people around the world have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and hundreds of thousands have died, upending the lives of healthcare workers, family members, friends, and so many others. Based on global data collected through midday July 27, 2020, nearly 4% of those diagnosed have died. By comparison, it is estimated that seasonal flu kills far less than 1% of people who have it.

Myth: *Data is skewed because sometimes a person who has COVID-19 is tested more than once, so is counted more than once.*

Fact: In Ohio, a person with COVID-19 is only counted once even if that person is tested multiple times. Each person has a unique identifier and epidemiologists use those identifiers to ensure that a person who tests positive is only counted once.

Myth: *If someone I have been around gets COVID-19, I'll get a call from a public health worker asking very personal questions.*

Fact: If you have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, yes, you may get a call from a public health worker. However, you will not be asked very personal questions. The public health worker will let you know that you may have been exposed, help you monitor symptoms and get care if needed, and help you avoid exposing others. Information that you share is kept confidential and your participation is voluntary. You also will never be asked for financial information so hang up immediately if someone asks for money or for your bank account information, Social Security number, or any password.

Myth: *If I am asked to quarantine but test negative for COVID-19, I can stop.*

Fact: It could take days before the infection shows up on a lab test. If you test negative for COVID-19 or feel healthy, you should still stay home (quarantine) for at least seven days after exposure to the virus, or at least 10 days if your test was taken before the fifth day. Keep monitoring for symptoms for 14 days, and contact a healthcare provider and isolate if symptoms develop.

Myths about prevention

Myth: *I can make my own hand sanitizer at home.*

Fact: The creation and use of homemade hand sanitizer is frowned upon over concerns regarding the correct use/concentration of ingredients and the need to work under sterile production conditions. Do not rely on “Do It Yourself” or “DIY” recipes, including those based solely on essential oils or formulated without correct compounding practices.

Myth: *I can clean and disinfect frequently touched objects with hand sanitizer.*

Fact: Use common, [EPA-registered](#) household disinfectants to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks. If surfaces are visibly dirty, clean with soap and water or detergent first.

Myth: *Being in the sun or high temperatures prevents COVID-19.*

Fact: Exposing yourself to the sun or to high temperatures DOES NOT prevent COVID-19. The disease can spread no matter how sunny or hot the weather is.

Myth: *Regularly rinsing my nose with saline or gargling with saltwater can help prevent COVID-19.*

Fact: There is no evidence that regularly rinsing the nose with saline or gargling with water protects people from infection with viruses that cause COVID-19 or other respiratory illnesses.

Myth: *Spraying alcohol, chlorine, or another disinfectant all over my body will kill COVID-19.*

Fact: Spraying alcohol, chlorine, or another disinfectant all over your body will not kill viruses that have

already entered your body. Spraying such substances can be harmful to clothes or mucous membranes such as those in the eyes and mouth.

Updated Dec. 4, 2020.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit coronavirus.ohio.gov

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the COVID-19 CareLine at 1-800-720-9616.