

5 Simple Steps to Social Distancing

Summary: Social distancing is becoming the new normal. Learn what it is, why it's needed and what it means to you.

Social distancing is likely a term you never heard until the recent coronavirus outbreak. So, what is social distancing and why should you practice it?

Social distancing is a fancy term for avoiding close contact with other people during a disease outbreak in order to avoid potentially transmitting the infection. The purpose of social distancing is to slow the spread of the virus to reduce its impact on society and the healthcare system.

How do you practice social distancing? Basically it means avoiding large gatherings and maintaining at least six feet of distance from other people. Here are some simple ways to do that by changing your daily routine:

1. **Avoid handshakes, hugs and other close greetings.** Handshakes and other customary greetings enable virus transmission through skin-to-skin contact. Substitute with something else — such as a smile or a wave.
2. **Work from home if you can.** The less contact you have with your co-workers and others, the less chance you have of spreading the virus. Substitute face-to-face meetings with emails and videoconferencing.
3. **Shop smart.** Only go to the store for groceries and other essentials. Try to go during slower times and maintain at least a six-foot distance from other shoppers.
4. **Eat in.** Now is a great time hone your culinary skills and make healthy, flavorful meals for you and your family. If you do go out, opt for the drive-through or carryout.
5. **Minimize outings.** Stay home as much as possible. Catch up on your reading or binge watch your favorite shows. If you do go out for a jog or to walk the dog, maintain your distance from other people.

People of all ages can be infected by the coronavirus. Older people and those with pre-existing medical conditions — such as asthma, diabetes and heart disease — may be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill. These people should stay at home and avoid contact with others.

Stay at home if you are feeling ill or are experiencing coronavirus [symptoms](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) [link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>]. Contact your doctor for advice.

See the Centers for Disease Control [coronavirus website](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html) [link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>] for information about the infection and tips on how you can protect yourself and your family.