

# SOCIAL DISTANCING

Tips from The Gerontological Society of America's National Adult Vaccination Program



## WHAT IS SOCIAL DISTANCING?

- Social distancing is a public health term that describes actions to stop or slow the spread of contagious diseases like COVID-19.
- Avoiding places where you may come into direct contact with other people, germs in the air, or contaminated surfaces is an important part of social distancing.
- Social distancing helps keep the number of cases of infected people manageable for health care providers and hospitals to provide care.

## WHERE DOES SOCIAL DISTANCING APPLY?

- Day-to-day activities such as going to work, school, the supermarket, religious gatherings, or doctor's visits.
- Wherever people gather, including large assemblies—such as concerts, sporting events, or rallies—as well as for travel by plane, train, or other public transportation.

## ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

- Instead of hugs or handshakes, consider smiling or bumping elbows.
- Stay apart from others: 3 feet is okay, 6 feet is better. Avoid touching your face, especially keep fingers out of your mouth, nose, and eyes.
- Sneeze and cough into tissues (or your elbow), immediately throw the tissues in a trash container, and then wash your hands.



## LARGE GATHERINGS

- Stay away from large gatherings, such as concerts or sporting events, to avoid viral contact—especially if you are older or have health conditions or if you visit with someone older or with chronic conditions.
- Check local guidance. Some places may be canceling events over a certain size attendance.

## DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES

- Consider online ordering and delivery services instead of going to public places like grocery stores and pharmacies.
- At religious services, refrain from physical contact such as holding hands, hugging, sharing a common cup, or using fountains with standing water.
- Wash your hands after touching keypads at checkout counters/ATMS, door knobs, tables/countertops, arm rests, shared pens or pencils, phones, coffee pots, or refrigerator/microwave handles.
- At restaurants, sit at a table instead of a crowded bar. If you can't wash your hands before eating, use hand sanitizer with 60% to 95% alcohol.





## WORK ENVIRONMENT

- If possible, work remotely and use virtual meetings or phone calls. For in-person meetings, greet with smiles instead of handshakes and stay several feet apart from others.
- Wash hands after touching door handles, equipment, desks, and keyboards. Use paper towels to open doors after handwashing. Keep equipment and phone clean using disinfectant products that kill viruses.
- Limit food sharing. If food is provided at work, be sure food prep staff have been screened and follow strict hygiene.
- Talk to your employer about financial stress caused by lost wages and reduced hours.

## HOME ENVIRONMENT

- Clean frequently touched areas like door knobs, light switches, countertops, and remote controls with store-bought disinfectants or bleach to kill COVID-19 and other germs that may enter your home.



## GETTING SICK



- If you need to go to the doctor or emergency department, call first for instructions and guidance. A virtual visit may be possible.
- If you have respiratory illness symptoms, avoid contact with others and call your doctor. If you must go out, wear a mask.
- If you have been exposed to COVID-19, you could be asked to self-quarantine in your home. Make plans for childcare, caregiving, and deliveries of food or medicine.
- If the stress of COVID-19 and social isolation is getting to you, seek care for possible anxiety and/or depression. Watch for symptoms of uncertainty, frustration, loneliness, anger, boredom, or a desire to use alcohol or drugs.

## TRAVEL

- Federal authorities suggest limiting long plane or train rides, particularly for those over age 60 or people with chronic conditions.
- Be aware of restrictions or bans on international and domestic travel.
- If taking public transportation, try to keep a distance of at least 3 feet between you and other passengers. Wash hands before and after your trip using soap and water, or use hand sanitizer with 60% to 95% alcohol.



For more information, visit the CDC website [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or the GSA compilation of COVID-19 resources [NAV.org](https://www.navp.org).

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NATIONAL ADULT VACCINATION PROGRAM  
CHARTING NEW FRONTIERS ACROSS THE AGING CONTINUUM

