

Dr. Jensen & Dr. Wilson's COVID-19 Update #11

Summer 2020

As we head into the summer and our fourth month of COVID, many of us are experiencing covid-information-fatigue. The initial fear around COVID is starting to wane and as our guard goes down, people may gravitate towards our prior habits and lifestyles. This adaptive behaviour can be beneficial; after all, “Keep Calm and Carry On” was the motto that got people through the blitz. However in this unique pandemic crisis, “carrying on” must include some safeguards or we will lose the ground we have gained these last few months. It is with this in mind that we offer you our latest advice on how to balance “saving lives” while trying to “live a life”.



Perfect World

As physicians, we stand by the recommendations from public health. **Wash your hands, wear a mask** when you are out in public places where you cannot maintain 2m distance, stay at home if you are sick, and practice **physical distancing** whenever possible. Keep a **small social circle** or [bubble of your immediate household members](#).

Real World

As community members and parents, we recognize that strict implementation of the rules can be challenging and some will not adhere to guidelines. Rather than a firm “NO,” we would rather offer strategies to minimize your risk of exposing yourself and others. The main factors to consider are **time, space, people, and place**.

Time

Less time with others means lower risk. Keep your interactions brief. Passing others carries miniscule risk. Once you are more than 15 minutes together, risk starts to climb.

Space

More space means lower risk. If you stay 2m (6') away from others, you are less likely to get splattered with droplets when they speak or cough. However, even if you are far apart inside a room for > 2 hrs the risk of infection increases. If **both parties wear masks** it becomes safer because masks catch most of the droplets. Wearing masks keeps the space between people safe and should be adopted when indoors.

People

Fewer people (and **safer people**) means lower risk. Limit the people you have in your bubble and be picky about who they are. Some people are riskier to be around, including those who work in group settings, those who are in healthcare where COVID is active, and those who do not practice proper social distancing. If you are at higher risk for bad outcomes with COVID (for example, diabetes, lung disease, or over 70), then you should be even more cautious.

Place

Outdoor spaces are much, much safer. Almost all clusters of outbreaks occurred in indoor settings. Also keep track of hot spots (e.g. NYC) and avoid them whenever possible.

Practically Speaking

If you are going to venture beyond what public health says (and remember **we are not endorsing this**), here are some suggestions to keep your risk to a minimum.

1. **Wear a mask.** Essential in indoors; also outdoors if you are going to be within 2m (6') of someone for more than 10 minutes. This is super important. Get a mask and wear it properly.
2. **Take it outside.** Outside spaces are safer than indoor spaces.
3. **Keep some distance** between you and others. When you gather, consider putting down hula hoops or chairs at an appropriate distance to keep people apart. (Most people underestimate 2m)
4. **Minimize the time together.** Keep things short and sweet. Risk starts to climb even with outdoor spaces around the 2-hour mark.
5. **Gain “risk credit”.** Work remotely; wear a mask; keep 2m distance; keep a small circle. All of these make you a safer person to be around.
6. **Be nosy.** If you are getting together with others, ask about their social habits. If they are taking risks, reconsider the invite. They could ruin the party if they bring COVID.
7. **Stay home** if you are sick. Let those you have been in contact with know that you are sick so they can take precautions. Get a COVID test if you have symptoms so you can alert others if positive.
8. **Consider social contracts.** If you plan to get together with a larger group (say at a cottage), consider a social contract where all parties agree to physically distance themselves for a week prior to minimize the risk of someone bringing in COVID.

Bottom line: as you make your decisions, think about risk as a function of **time, space, people and place**. Think also about how you would feel about accidentally bringing it into your environment. You do not want to be a “super spreader” like the young adult in Korea who managed to infect 96 others in a short period of time. If only he had limited his circle, if only he had worn a mask, if only he had stayed outdoors...

Finally, if you are breaking the rules, we cannot stress enough how important it is to **wear a mask**. This will significantly reduce the chances of you spreading illness to others and so the decisions you make will be less likely to impact those around you. (PS. This does not give you a carte blanche to do as you please)

As always, we are here to provide care and advice that is practical and accessible. We recognize that this newsletter may spark some discussion and even some angst or anger, but we feel strongly that open dialogue is important. We want everyone in our community to understand the risks and make decisions carefully, remembering that the worst global pandemic of this century is far from over.

Wear a Mask