

TeensHealth.org

A safe, private place to get
doctor-approved information
on health, emotions, and life.

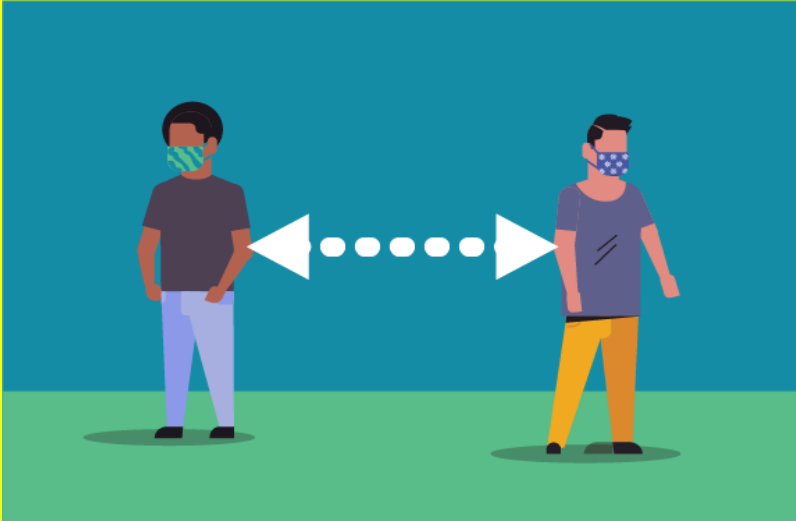
Coronavirus (COVID-19): How You Can Make a Difference



Just a few months ago, people were at school, playing sports, going to events, and hanging out with friends. Now, everything has changed. People are adjusting to a new normal.

In many parts of the United States and all over the world, people are staying home more. We're missing events and activities we enjoy. We're limiting our contact with other people.

Doing all this is called social distancing (or physical distancing). It's one of the ways coronavirus has changed our everyday lives.



What Is Social Distancing?

Social distancing means keeping enough space between people to avoid the

spread of germs. Experts say the right amount of space is about 6 feet (2 meters).



We all try not to get too close to people when they (or we) are sick with any contagious virus. But social distancing

is more than staying away from people who are sick or coughing, or who don't feel well. It means keeping a safe distance from people who don't live with us, even people who look and

feel perfectly healthy. Even though we feel perfectly healthy.

Social distancing is a new idea for most of us. But it's not new to scientists who study the spread of diseases. They know it's something we all can do to make a big difference in the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

How Does Social Distancing Help?

When everyone in a community does it, social distancing slows the spread of the coronavirus. The result is that fewer people get sick at the same time.



When fewer people are sick, doctors and hospitals are better able to keep up with taking care of people. Scientists have time to work on vaccines that can help prevent people from getting sick.



Why Is Social

Distancing so Important Now?

A few things about this new coronavirus make social distancing so important:

The new coronavirus is very contagious. It spreads quickly and easily from person to person. It can spread when someone who has the virus coughs, sneezes, or just breathes too close to someone else.

Coronavirus can cause some people to become seriously sick.

People can have the virus and pass it on even before they know they have it, even if they don't show symptoms or become sick.

This is a new virus for humans, and there's no vaccine yet to help us become immune to it.

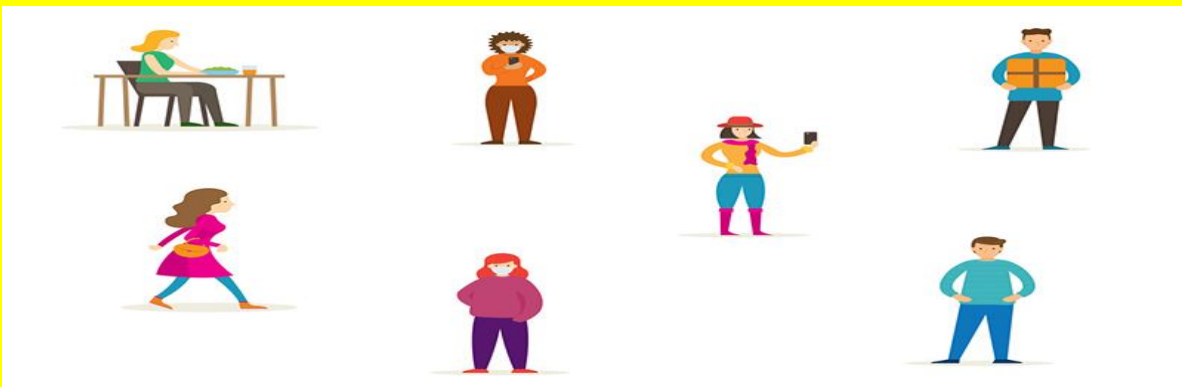
What Can I Do?



Social distancing means we need to keep our distance from friends, classmates, teammates, neighbours, and even people in our family (except the ones we live with). That's a big change from the way we normally interact.

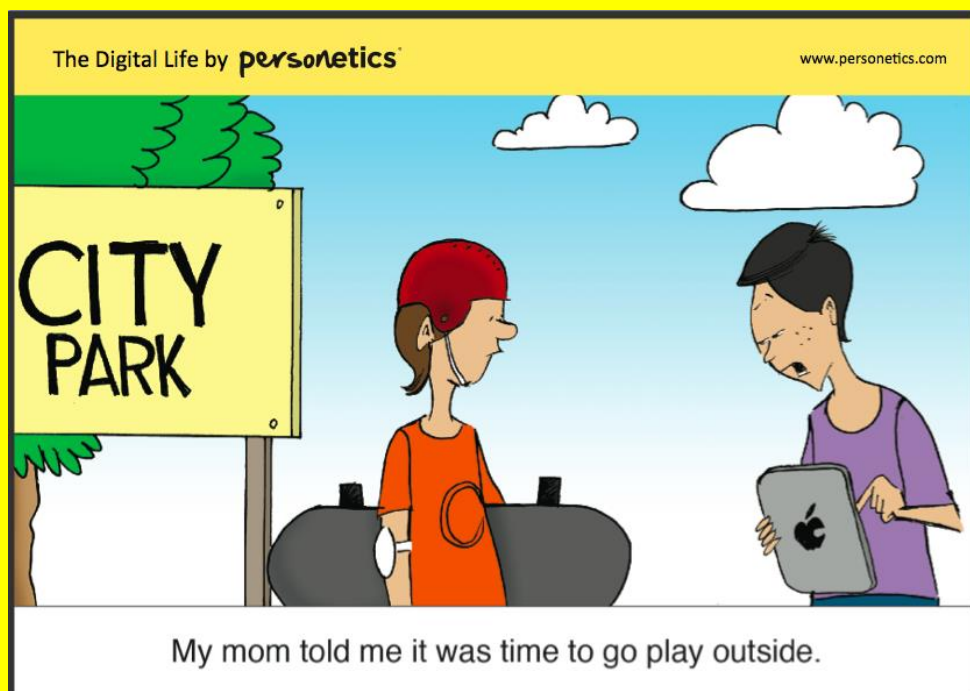
And it's not easy. No one wants to be apart from the people they like to be with and missing the things they like to do. With all these changes, people are missing things they looked forward to, like prom, graduation, tournaments, trips, parties, and performances. Or just missing each other. It's a lot to ask, but it's also a huge way to help others.

Social distancing is something we can each do to protect lots of people, including people we don't know. It's hard, but it's worth it. And it won't last forever. We will get back to



normal again.

For now, we can give and receive support from each other while we're social distancing. We can stay connected even while we're apart.



Can I Go Outside?

Even with social

distancing, you can get outside to exercise every day. You can take a walk, run, bike ride, hike, or practice on your own. Just keep the needed distance from others.

When going out, it is best to wear a mask or cloth face covering. This can help prevent the spread of the virus. Even when you're wearing a mask, keep at least 6 feet between you and other people.

To see how to put on and remove masks, clean them, or make your own mask, check the CDC's guide.

You can be active indoors too. Have a virtual dance party. Look for exercise videos on YouTube. Take a "live" fitness class with Zoom. Be creative and share your ideas with people you know.

How Can I Stay in Touch With People?

We can stay connected by talking, texting, and being together virtually. We're used to doing this with friends. But some people may need help staying connected.



Teach your parents and grandparents how to use Skype or Zoom if they don't already know. Have virtual get-togethers. Send each other funny cartoons and uplifting messages. Share memes.

Because of social distancing, people need to find ways to stay connected more than ever.

Your area might allow people to get together for sports, activities, and school. If you do get together with other people, be sure to wear a mask, wash your hands well and often, and stay 6 feet apart. There may be other recommendations to help slow down the spread too. For example, if you go back to school, you may be asked to stay with the same teacher and students for the whole day.

What Else Can I Do to Help?



Along with social distancing, everyone can help by washing their hands well and often. You also can help keep surfaces clean at home. Ask parents what else you can do to pitch in. Find out about ways to help in your community.

Even during the time of social distancing, there are ways to help – and plenty of ways to stay connected while making a difference.

Reviewed by: D'Arcy Lyness, PhD

Date reviewed: August 2020

Nemours

Note: All information on Teens Health® is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.

© 1995–2020 The Nemours Foundation. All rights reserved.

Images provided by The Nemours Foundation, iStock, Getty Images, Veer, Shutterstock, and Clipart.com.