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Coronavirus Planning and FAQ

Overwhelmed by the media coverage about COVID-19? Tired of socially isolating and questioning the value of that? We will bring you updates when we think it is warranted, but if you have questions at any time, please contact us. Both Janet and Carol are monitoring a number of news sources, safety/health sites, and research sites, keeping up with the information coming out.

Frequently Asked Questions

What's the difference between coronavirus, novel coronavirus and COVID-19? Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause colds and flus. The one responsible for this pandemic is usually called the novel coronavirus, because it's the newest one. The official name is SARS-CoV-2: SARS, because it is related to the SARS virus that caused an illness outbreak in 2003 and CoV for Corona Virus. The disease this virus causes is COVID-19, CoronaVirus Disease 2019. Feel free to call it the COVID-19 virus, just as the World Health Organization does.

How do people become infected? When you exhale, and even more so when you cough or sneeze, you give out droplets of mucus too small to see. Those droplets land on any nearby surface. If you have COVID-19 virus in your respiratory tract, those particles contain lots of the virus. When someone near you gets that droplet on the mucus membranes of their nose, mouth and eyes, the virus gets into that person's body, causing an infection.

Why do we have to keep a distance of six feet?

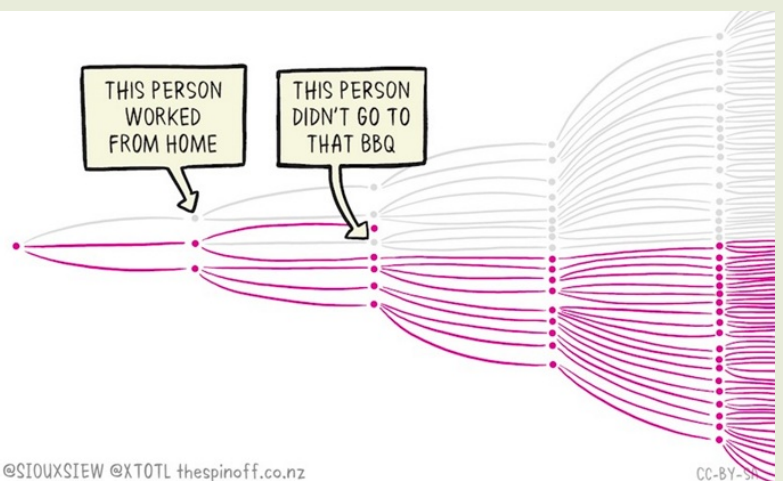
The respiratory particles or droplets travel about three feet, maybe even more. If you stay at least six feet away, you're less likely to breathe in those droplets.

(Illustration by Toby Morris, from Thespinoff.co.nz. See <https://thespinoff.co.nz/covid-19/25-03-2020/the-side-eye-viruses-vs-everyone/> for a good illustration of why social distancing works.)

If the droplets are spread through the air, is all air contaminated? The droplets don't stay in the air for very long. They'll drop onto surfaces within about ten minutes.

Why do we have to wash our hands?

The primary route of exposure is from getting the droplets on the mucus membranes. (There may be transmission



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from breathing in the droplets if you're very close to the infected person.) Your hands can pick up the virus from a contaminated surface. If you then touch the mucus membranes of your nose and mouth, or your eyes, the virus can infect you.

When you wash your hands, the soap and the mechanical action of rubbing your hands lift foreign matter (dirt, virus) off your skin. Using sanitizer decreases the viability of any pathogen (disease organism) on your skin. Hand washing is more effective at removing the virus from your skin than using hand sanitizers, but hand sanitizers are a lot more convenient. Use both.

For a good illustration of why soap and water works so well, see this video: <https://www.vox.com/2020/3/18/21185262/how-soap-kills-the-coronavirus> .

Does the virus survive on surfaces?

For a while. There's little research on this, because the virus is new. The only study published to date (but not yet confirmed) showed that this virus survived up to three days on plastic, two days on metal, and one day on cardboard. Studies of related coronaviruses showed survival for as long as 9 days on plastic. Survival on paper products is usually much less.

Can you catch it from food?

No. You cannot get COVID-19 by swallowing it. But if an infected person coughed on the outside of the container, it could cause infection (see the note about survival on surfaces). If you are picking up take-out (good support for local, small businesses), once you get home, take the food out of the packaging and wash your hands. Then eat. And keep hands away from your face.

How do I know what products can be used to clean?

The EPA has been updating the list of disinfectant products believed to be effective against the coronavirus. The list is available here. Pay attention to the contact time recommended for the product to be effective.

Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry published a guidance document on worker protections related to COVID-19, including information on sick leave, FMLA, workers compensation, and unemployment.

What measures should my business take?

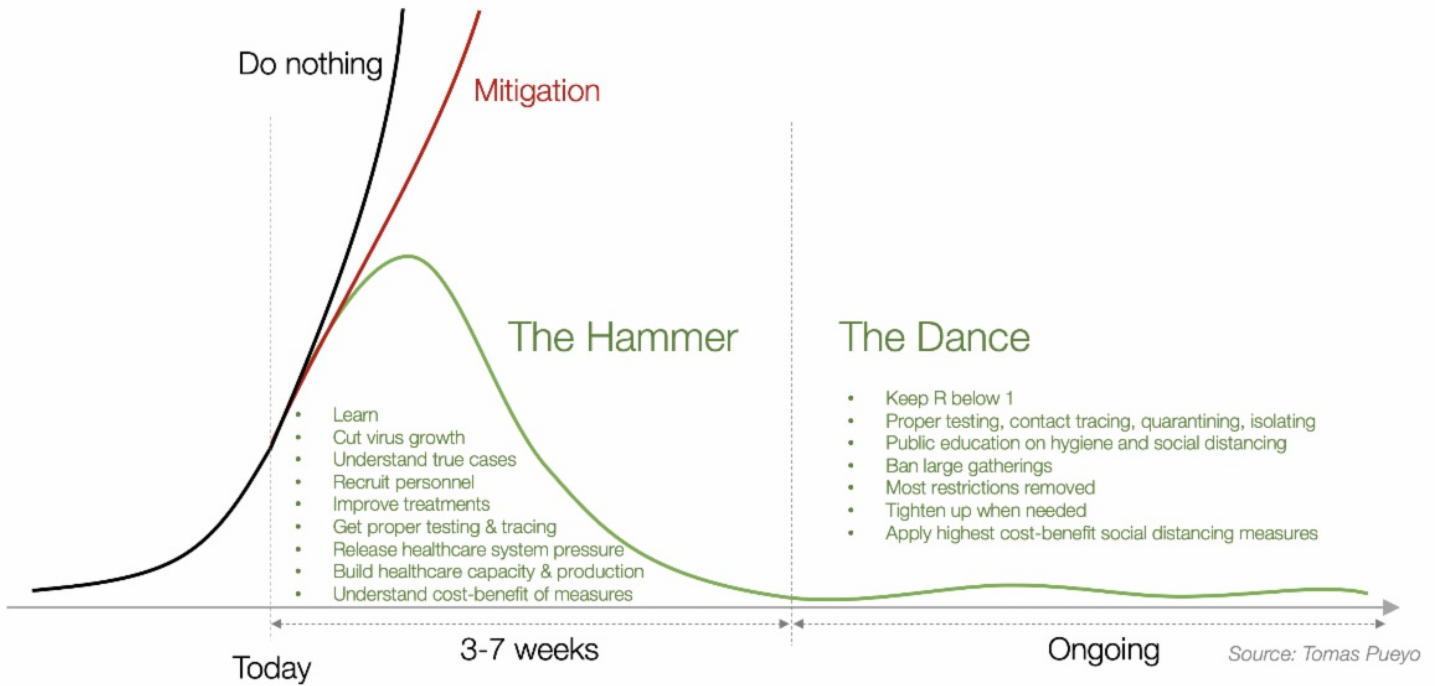
- Keep away from each other. Stagger breaks and lunches, so you don't have people near each other.
- Encourage employees to clean hands, cover coughs, and keep hands away from face.
- Wipe/disinfect the surfaces that are frequently touched, including door handles, time clocks, refrigerator handles, microwaves, faucets, and light switches.

How long do we need to keep this social distancing up?

If we stop while the number of infections are still on the rise, we might get a temporary drop - but then the virus will come back with a vengeance. We saw this happen in Denver in the 1918 flu pandemic. Mortality started to rise. Schools closed, public gatherings were banned. Those measures began to control the virus. Then people began to gather again. Very soon, the mortality rate rose again, even higher.

The sooner we can stop the spread of the virus, by staying away from each other, the sooner life can return to normal. Research modelers estimate it will take weeks (one estimate is 3-7 weeks), not days.

Chart 13: Suppression vs. Mitigation vs. Do Nothing — early on



What is CHES doing?

We're still working, because we can do much of our work anywhere.

We are working on setting up conference calling capability so we can hold safety committee meetings remotely. We are also working on ways that we can deliver training remotely, so that you do not have to gather employees in a group.

We're not doing respirator fit testing now, unless absolutely necessary.

We continue to field and address questions and concerns as they come in.

We will continue to send out updates and information sheets.

As always, reach out if you have any specific questions, about coronavirus or any other environmental, health or safety issue. In the meantime, stay safe and stay distant (physically).