



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

[COVID-19: Questions and Answers, November 20, 2020](#)

Hi, I'm Ursula Phoenix Weir with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I'm here today with Dr. Henry Walke, incident manager for CDC's response to COVID-19. Welcome, Dr. Walke, thank you for joining us this afternoon.

And thank you, Ursula. It's a pleasure to be here.

Wonderful. Well, let's go ahead and get started. Dr. Walke, as you know, this pandemic has been going on for quite a while and people have been taking measures to protect themselves and stay safe for a very long time. What can you say to everyone out there to help them better understand how they can continue to protect themselves against COVID-19?

Yeah, thanks for the question. Now is really the time to be vigilant. As the cold weather comes in, and cases are rising across our country, and we see hospital admissions are rising as well, now's the time to be vigilant. We have to be careful in our interactions with other people. We need to wear a mask, we need to watch our distance, and we need to wash our hands.

Wonderful. So, what are some of the most important ways that I and the viewers can do to protect ourselves against COVID-19?

Yeah, again, you know, the virus is spread through droplets, through our -- from our mouth and from our nose. And so, one of the most effective ways to prevent transmission or infecting others is to wear a mask. Just a very simple cough mask that goes over your ears can really stop transmission. It collects those large droplets. And the other, an important piece to remember is, is that people aren't always symptomatic, they don't have symptoms sometimes when they're infected. And so, this mask can prevent spread of the virus from those who not only who are symptomatic, but also those who don't have any symptoms at all, and they're just walking around our society potentially infected and could spread.

So, we need to wear a mask when we're out in public outside of our households. We also need to watch our distance. So, this would be maintaining at least six feet between people. Wear a mask, watch your distance, and then wash your hands. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds at a time. So those are the three W's. We also want people to avoid large gatherings. This is also an event, for example, where we could see a lot of spread. People come together 20, 30 people together, not from the same households, this is where transmission can easily spread. So, wear a mask, watch your distance and wash your hands,

and avoid large gatherings.

So, on the subject of masks, and I have my mask here with me today, one of the questions that we get pretty regularly on social media is do I really need to wear a mask?

Well, the simple answer is yes. And not only wear a mask, but wear it appropriately. You know, we see people and you walk around in our society, you will see people wearing it on their chin, wearing it on their mouth, wearing it with their nose uncovered. And again, these droplets, these respiratory droplets or particles are spread from our mouth and from our nose. So, we need to actually cover both to be effective. So, and the mask is really protecting others. So again, I could have -- I could be infected and have no symptoms at all. And by wearing a mask in public I'm protecting others from becoming infected. So, yes.

Absolutely. Dr. Walke, we also get a lot of questions about testing. Can you talk more about testing and where I can go about getting testing completed?

Yes. So if you have symptoms of COVID-19, and that would include fever, headache, a runny nose, a cough, then you should be tested. Those that have a close contact, you know, within six feet for a total of more than 15 minutes to a case, a person who has confirmed COVID-19, those people should be tested. So if you have symptoms you should be tested. If you're a close contact of someone who has a confirmed case they should be tested, as well as your state and local health department may recommend certain populations to be tested. For example, those on college campuses, or potentially those in particular workplaces. Where to be tested is a separate question. So there's testing in these community testing sites for example. The easiest way to be tested is actually to call your health care provider.

Okay.

See your health care provider, describe your symptoms. And then they can help you arrange a test either at their office or actually a Community Health Care Center, a federally qualified health care center or a community testing site, so multiple options to be tested. So please, any symptoms, close contact with someone who has a confirmed case or if your state or local health department asked you to be tested, there's a lot of options for testing.

Alright. Good deal. Earlier in our chat, you mentioned travel. With a winter holidays approaching, is it safe to travel to see family and friends?

Well, unfortunately, the short answer to that question is, you shouldn't travel unless you have to, it's more essential travel. So I think I would say stay home if you can. And that will limit your risk. If you must travel, for whatever reasons, and people have different reasons that they need to travel, then wear a mask and

wash your hands and watch your distance. The concern about travel is whether you're in an airport or bus terminal, a train terminal, people are in line, they tend to bunch up and they can't maintain their distance as well. And so, if you must travel, then be careful. Do the three W's. Wear a mask, watch your distance, wash your hands, and avoid crowding and clumping together in those terminal hubs. Those hubs where people are gathering to get onto an airplane or get onto a train. So avoid travel, if you can. And if you must, then please wear a mask and watch your distance and wash your hands.

So we touched on this a little bit earlier. But let's talk a little more about this. What can people do to safely spend time with their families during the holiday season?

Yeah. So as holidays approach cold weather is also approaching and people tend to congregate inside. So outdoors is better than indoors. And so if you have gatherings, friends and neighbors and families, it's best to have this outdoors appropriately distanced with mask. So outdoors better than indoors. If you're indoors, then lower the number of people in a room so you can appropriately distance. Open a window if that's possible. Put a fan in the window to increase ventilation, pushing the pulling the air out of the room. And then wear a mask, wash your hands, watch your distance. So the three W's and avoiding those sort of large clumping of people, large and high density of people together is what is what we could do. I encourage people to put their coats on and talk outside if they can.

All very important. One final question, Dr. Walke. What would you tell a friend or family member to do to avoid COVID-19?

Similar things. And I just hesitate to repeat myself again, the three W's for certain and avoiding crowds. But also to maintain vigilance. We're all tired, we're fatigued. It has been months into the pandemic and so people tend to let down their guard, let down their mask. And now's not the time to do that. Again, we're seeing the cases go up, we're seeing hospital admissions go up. And so I tell my family and friends to you can have interactions with your friends, you can have interactions with families, but there's ways to do it safely. So I know it's hard. And I know that there may be many more months of this to come, because we'll have vaccine, but we won't have vaccine for everyone. And so we'll still have to maintain these measures we've been talking about washing your hands, watching your distance and wearing a mask and avoiding large gatherings. But this works. We've seen it work in multiple places, in multiple counties, in multiple cities around the nation. So if we can maintain our vigilance, and we can maintain our social networks at appropriate distance we'll get through this together.

Alright. Good deal. Well, thank you, Dr. Walke. This has been a pleasure. We appreciate all the information that you've provided for us this afternoon.

Great, thank you.

And thank you all for watching. You heard from our expert. You can slow the spread of COVID-19 by wearing a mask consistently and correctly, staying at least six feet apart and washing your hands often for at least 20 seconds. Be sure to stay updated on the latest COVID-19 information by visiting [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus). Stay safe and healthy.

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Remember these 3 Healthy Habits

Wear a mask

Stay 6 feet away from others

Wash your hands for 20 seconds

Learn more: [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)