

Coronavirus COVID-19

Sex and the coronavirus (COVID-19)

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It's caused by a virus called coronavirus.

To help stop the spread of coronavirus everyone has been asked to stay at home. You should only go out for a few reasons, and if you do, keep 2 metres distance between you and other people. Read more about coronavirus on www.hse.ie/coronavirus and on <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/covid-19-translated-resources/>

While there is no evidence that coronavirus can be sexually transmitted, it can be passed on through close contact with someone who has the virus.

Reduce the risk of coronavirus during sex

You may not know if someone has coronavirus. Being sexually active with another person involves some risk of getting the virus. You can reduce this risk by following the advice below.

- Only be sexually active with someone you live with who does not have the virus or symptoms of the virus
- Avoid being sexually active with anyone outside your household.
- Avoid kissing anyone outside of your household and anyone with symptoms. Kissing can easily pass coronavirus.
- Taking a break from physical and face-to-face interactions is worth considering, especially if you usually meet your sex partners online or make a living by having sex. Consider using video dates, sexting or chat rooms. Make sure to disinfect keyboards and touch screens that you share with others.
- Masturbation will not spread coronavirus, especially if you wash your hands (and any sex toys) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after.
- While the current advice is not to have sex or kiss anyone outside of your household, if you do, it is important to limit to as few partners as possible. **Remember close sexual contact with anyone you are not living with can put you and others at risk of coronavirus.** Use condoms and dental dams to reduce contact with saliva or faeces, especially during oral or anal sex and avoid rimming (mouth on anus) as it might spread coronavirus.
- Wash before and after sex. This is more important than ever. Wash hands thoroughly and often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

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Safer Sex Practices

Sexual activity can carry the risk of an STI and unplanned pregnancy. It is important to take the usual safer sex precautions

Remember:

- Using condoms, correctly and every time reduces your risk of an STI.
- Condoms, contraception and emergency contraception help prevent unplanned pregnancies. (read more at www.sexualwellbeing.ie)
- Condoms, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and being on effective treatment for HIV and having an undetectable viral load, all help prevent HIV transmission.

There is no evidence to suggest that people on PrEP or HIV treatment have additional protection against coronavirus.

When to consider avoiding sex

- Avoid sex and especially kissing if your partner has symptoms of coronavirus, for example fever, cough or shortness of breath. **If you develop symptoms of coronavirus, you should self-isolate and phone your doctor. See:** <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/self-isolation-and-limited-social-interaction>
- Avoid sex if you or your partner has a medical condition that can lead to a serious illness because of coronavirus. Medical conditions include lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system (for example, having unsuppressed HIV and a low CD4 count). Find out more on <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/at-risk-groups.html>.

Sexual activity should only ever be between consenting adults who have the legal capacity to make a decision. Read more about consent at <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/sexual-health/consent-and-the-law/>

Other important information

There are significant **restrictions to public STI services**. Because of the coronavirus situation, Find out more about these restrictions, at (<http://bit.ly/sti-service-restrictions>).

For specific information on coronavirus and sex for gay and bisexual men, transmen and men who have sex with men, please see: <http://man2man.ie/resources/> and <https://www.hivireland.ie/what-we-do/mpower/sexual-health-and-covid-19/>

For information on the coronavirus and people living with HIV, <https://www.hivireland.ie/living-with-hiv/hiv-and-covid-19/>

For more information on sexual health and wellbeing, log onto <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/> and <http://man2man.ie/>

This information was last updated on 31st March 2020 and is subject to change depending on evolving restrictions and evidence linked to coronavirus.

