

COVID-19 & Sex: What You Need to Know

Adapted from the New York City Health Department document: Sex and Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) March 2020

WE STILL HAVE A LOT TO LEARN ABOUT COVID-19 AND SEX BUT HERE IS WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR:

- You can get COVID-19 from a person who has it. The virus is spread through direct contact with saliva or mucus and can be spread as far as 6 feet from an infected person who coughs or sneezes.
- COVID-19 has been found in feces of people who are infected with the virus.
- COVID-19 has not yet been found in semen or vaginal fluid and we know that other coronaviruses do not efficiently transmit through sex itself.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SEX AND INTIMACY?

- **SOLO SEX:** You are your safest sex partner. Masturbation will not spread COVID-19, especially if you wash your hands and sex toys with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after.
- **SEX WITH SOMEONE YOU LIVE WITH:** The next safest partner is a consenting adult that you live with. Having close contact – including sex – with only a small circle of people helps prevent the spread of COVID-19. Avoid having any new partners outside of your household during this time.
- **ONLINE/VIRTUAL SEX:** If you usually meet your sex partners online or make a living by having sex, consider taking a break from in-person dates. Video dates, sexting, or chat rooms are a safer option. Always be mindful of what you post online and always keep digital consent mutual.
- **KISSING:** The virus is present in the mouth so kissing carries a strong likelihood of picking up or passing on COVID-19.
- **RIMMING (mouth on anus):** There is evidence that the virus is present in feces of those infected but it is unclear if it remains infectious in this state. However, if you are close enough to be rimming you are more likely to be in contact with saliva or mucus where we know the virus is infectious.

WAYS TO REDUCE THE RISK:

- Condoms and dental dams can reduce contact with saliva or feces, especially during oral or anal sex.
- Washing up before and after sex is more important than ever. Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This includes washing any sex toys you have used.
- Skip sex if you or your partner are feeling unwell especially if you or your partner has a medical condition that can lead to more severe COVID-19 (for example, lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system, or HIV).
- Disinfect keyboards and touch screens that you share with others (for video chat, for watching pornography or for anything else).

WHAT ABOUT PREGNANCY?

- To prevent pregnancy, make sure you have an effective form of birth control for the coming weeks.
- If you are pregnant and have questions, please read this information on COVID and pregnancy.

COVID-19 Hotline: 905-974-9848

phscovid19@hamilton.ca

hamilton.ca/coronavirus