



County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency

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March 13, 2020 COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus)
Interim Guidance for Social Distancing

The County of Santa Cruz Public Health Division (Public Health) has confirmed community spread of COVID-19. This guidance is intended to reduce interactions between people, particularly those who don't normally come together from different areas. This will reduce the number of people ill on any given day, preserve health system capacity, and as a result, reduce mortality by insuring those severely ill receive care.

Each of us must do our part to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 to protect our older citizens and vulnerable individuals at risk of serious outcomes should they be exposed. Additionally, there is a particular focus on creating space between individuals who have come together on a one-time or rare basis and who have very different travel patterns such as those coming from multiple countries, states or counties.

The updated recommendations for social distancing to reduce the spread of COVID-19 to include the [State Guidance on Gatherings](#) as well as the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Community Mitigation Strategies for COVID-19](#).

These recommendations are effective immediately through March 31, 2020 and may be updated upon further evaluation and public health need.

- 1. Large Gatherings** (considered 50 or more people per Santa Cruz Public Health Department): **Cancel Non-essential Events**
 - Recommend cancelling or postponing large gatherings, such as concerts, sporting events, conventions or large community events.
 - A “gathering” is any event or convening that brings together people in a

single room or single space at the same time, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, cafeteria, or any other indoor or outdoor space.

- Do not attend any events or gatherings if sick (fever with cough or other flu like symptoms).
- Gatherings of individuals who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should be limited to no more than 10 people.
 - This includes gatherings such as those at retirement facilities, assisted living facilities, and support groups for people with health conditions.
- Smaller gatherings held in venues that do not allow social distancing of 6 feet per person should be postponed or canceled.
- For events that aren't cancelled, we recommend:
 - Having hand washing capabilities, hand sanitizers and tissues available.
 - Frequently cleaning commonly touched surface areas like counter tops and handrails.
 - Finding ways to create physical space of 6 feet to minimize close contact as much as possible.

2. Vulnerable Populations: Limit Outings

- People who are 60 years of age and older. The risk increases significantly thereafter and escalates with age, with persons over age 80 in the highest risk category.
- People, regardless of age, with underlying health conditions including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, or chronic lung diseases like COPD, as well as those with severely weakened immune systems.
- For vulnerable populations, don't go to gatherings with more than 10 people, unless it is essential and then practice social distancing as much as possible (recommended 6 feet).
- Avoid people who are sick.

3. Workplace and Businesses: Minimize Exposure

- Suspend nonessential employee travel.

- Minimize the number of employees working in close proximity, including minimizing or canceling large in-person meetings and conferences (50 people or more).
- Use phones, videos or video conferencing to reduce the need for close interactions.
- Avoid direct physical contact, such as hand-shaking, holding hands, and hugging.
- Encourage employees to stay home when they are sick and maximize flexibility in sick leave or other leave benefits.
- Do not require a doctor's note for employees who are sick.
- Some people need to be at work to provide essential services of great benefit to the community. They can take steps in their workplace to minimize risk.

4. Schools: Safety First

- There is currently a county wide dismissal of all public schools in the county March 16-20. The County Office of Education, schools and districts will work with Santa Cruz County Public Health Division to determine the timing for the return of students and staff, and any additional steps needed for the school to reopen.
- If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 at a school, the Santa Cruz County Public Health Division will work with the school and the district to determine the best measures, including potential school dismissal.
- Schools should ensure students' and staffs' privacy to help prevent discrimination or unnecessary stigmatization.
- Do not go to school if sick.
- If you have a child with chronic health conditions, consult your doctor about school attendance.
- Equip all schools and classrooms with hand sanitizers and tissues.
- Recommend rescheduling or cancelling medium to large events that are not essential.
- Recommend cancelling field trips.
- Explore remote teaching and online options to continue learning.
- Families should prepare for potential closures.
- Consider modifying School Nutrition Programs availability, particularly in schools with high rates of students receiving free and reduced meals.

- Maintain community social distancing measures while school is closed, including discouraging students or staff from gathering elsewhere.

5. Public and Commercial Transportation: Cleaning and Protection

- Increase cleaning of vehicles paying special attention to commonly touched surface areas.
- Provide hand washing supplies in stations and hand sanitizers and tissues in vehicles.

6. Health Care Settings: Avoid as possible, protect the vulnerable

- All health care facilities including long term care facilities, must have a COVID-19 plan in accordance with CDPH guidelines.
- All health care facilities, including long term care facilities, must screen all staff and visitors for illness and turn away those with symptoms.
- The general public should avoid going to medical settings such as hospitals, nursing homes and long-term care facilities. If you are ill, call your health care provider ahead of time, and you may be able to be served by phone or receive other instructions.
- Do not visit emergency rooms unless it is essential.

7. Everyone: Do your part

The best way for all community members to reduce the risk of getting sick, from many illnesses including colds, flu and COVID-19 are:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow, not your hand, or use a tissue and discard.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Avoid touching your face (eyes, mouth, and nose)
- Avoid direct physical contact, such as hand-shaking, holding hands, and hugging. Monitor your health and follow the instructions of public health officials.
- There is no recommendation for healthy people to wear masks to prevent themselves from getting sick.

Prepare Yourself and Your Family: You can also prepare for the possible disruption caused by an outbreak. Preparedness actions include:

- Prepare to work from home if that is possible for your job, and your employer.
- Make sure you have a supply of all essential medications for your family.
- Prepare a childcare plan if you or a caregiver are sick.
- Make arrangements for how your family will manage a prolonged school dismissal.
- Plan for how you can care for a sick family member without getting sick yourself.
- Take care of each other and check in by phone with friends, family and neighbors that are vulnerable to serious illness or death if they get COVID-19.
- Keep common spaces clean to help maintain a healthy environment for you and others. Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned regularly with disinfecting sprays, wipes or common household cleaning products.

What will all this achieve?

The timely implementation of aggressive strategies that create social distance and those that reduce close contact of people not regularly together, including limiting gatherings, has proven effective in prior pandemics at delaying rates of transmission and reducing illness and death.

By decreasing the prevalence of disease across Santa Cruz County we will:

- Reduce the number of Santa Cruz County residents who contract COVID-19 before an effective treatment or vaccine is available.
- Protect those most likely to experience severe symptoms, such as older residents and those with underlying chronic conditions.
- Preserve and protect our health care delivery system, including our health care workforce, so they can care for the least healthy individuals in the community for any medical condition, not just COVID-19.
- Minimize the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 over the long run.

For general information on COVID-19 please call 211, or text COVID19 to 211211, or visit www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus for updates and links to state and federal guidance.