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## FAQ on Recommendations to Reduce the Spread of the Coronavirus - March 6, 2020

### What are the recommendations by the San Francisco Health Department for social distancing?

- Vulnerable populations should limit outings. Vulnerable populations also should not attend large gatherings unless it is essential. Vulnerable populations are people 60 years old and older; and people with health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, kidney disease, and weakened immune systems.
- If you can telecommute, you should.
- Avoid people who are sick.
- Non-essential large gatherings should be cancelled or postponed. Do not attend any events or gatherings if you are sick.
- Everyone should avoid health care settings if possible – even if you are not ill.

### How long will the recommendations for social distancing be in place?

We expect these measures to be in place for an initial period of two weeks, and we will continuously assess their impact to determine if they need to be adjusted.

### Why is the Health Department recommending heightened social distancing?

The Health Department is making strong recommendations for social distancing to reduce the spread of the virus and protect community health. The recommendations also will protect the health of vulnerable populations and ensure that essential public services (schools and transportation) are taking steps to protect the public.

### What prompted the Health Department to make the social distancing recommendations?

The Health Department decided to make the recommendations following two coronavirus cases among San Francisco residents. These cases are proof that the virus is spreading in our community.

### How will social distancing help prevent the spread of the coronavirus?

To lessen the impact of coronavirus on our community, we must reduce the times and places when people come together. People in normal social circumstances can spread the virus.

### Who are vulnerable populations?

Vulnerable populations are people 60 years old and older; and people with health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, kidney disease, and weakened immune systems.

### What are the recommendations for workplaces and businesses?

Workplaces and businesses should minimize exposure by following these recommendations:

- Suspend nonessential employee travel.
- Minimize the number of employees working within arm's length of one another, including minimizing or canceling large in-person meetings and conferences.
- Urge employees to stay home when they are sick and maximize flexibility in sick leave benefits.

- Do not require a doctor's note for employees who are sick.
- Consider use of telecommuting options.
- Suspend nonessential employee travel.
- 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.

### **Should large gatherings be canceled or postponed?**

Yes, all non-essential large gatherings should be canceled or postponed.

### **What should essential large gatherings do to prepare?**

Do not attend if sick. For events that aren't cancelled, we recommend: Having hand washing capabilities, hand sanitizers and tissues; frequently cleaning high touch surface areas like counter tops and hand rails; finding ways to create physical space to minimize close contact as much as possible.

### **What is the definition of a large gathering?**

The recommendation includes large gatherings such as concerts, sporting events, conventions or large community events.

### **Is the San Francisco Health Department recommending that school be cancelled?**

No, the Health Department is not recommending that school be canceled. If there is a confirmed case of the coronavirus at a school, the Health Department will work with the school and the district to determine the best measures including potential school closure.

### **What are the recommendations for schools?**

All schools and classrooms should be equipped with hand sanitizers and tissues. Schools should reschedule or cancel medium to large events that are not essential. Schools should explore remote teaching and online options to continue learning. Also, schools should develop a plan for county-wide school closures, and families should prepare for potential closures.

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### **What should I do if my school remains open?**

Do not go to school if you are sick. If you have a child with chronic health conditions, consult your doctor about school attendance.

### **What are the recommendations for transit?**

To protect the public, transit providers should increase cleaning of vehicles and high touch surface areas. Also, provide hand washing/hand sanitizers and tissues in stations and on vehicles.

### **What are the recommendations for health care settings?**

The general public should avoid going to medical settings such as hospitals, nursing homes and long-term care facilities, even if you are not ill. Do not visit emergency rooms unless it is essential. Health care settings should protect the vulnerable.

### **What are the recommendations for long-term care facilities?**

Again, everyone should avoid health care settings if possible – even if you are not ill. Long-term care facilities must have a coronavirus (COVID-19) plan in accordance with DPH guidelines. Long-term care facilities must screen all

staff and visitors for illness and turn away those with symptoms.

### **What should I do if I am sick?**

If you are ill, call your health care provider ahead of time, and you may be able to be served by phone.

### **How can people reduce the risk of getting sick and prevent the spread of the coronavirus?**

The best way for all San Franciscans to reduce their risk of getting sick, as with seasonal colds or the flu, still applies to prevent COVID-19:

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your cough or sneeze.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Try alternatives to shaking hands, like an elbow bump or wave.
- If you have recently returned from a country, state or region with ongoing COVID-19 infections, monitor your health and follow the instructions of public health officials.
- There is no recommendation to wear masks at this time to prevent yourself from getting sick.

### **How can people prepare for the possible disruption caused by an outbreak?**

To prepare for the possible disruption of an outbreak, you should:

- 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.
- Make a child care plan if you or a care giver are sick.
- Make arrangements about how your family will manage a school closure.
- Make a 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.

### **How can people stay informed on the latest news about COVID-19?**

Visit [sfdph.org](https://www.sfdph.org) for the latest information, and sign up for the City's new alert service for official updates: text COVID19SF to 888-777.