

**March 5, 2020 Updated Recommendations
from the County of Santa Clara Public Health Department
to Protect Residents of the County from Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**

The County of Santa Clara's Public Health Department is taking proactive steps to protect the health of our community by making recommendations that are meant to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in our community and reduce the number of people infected, and especially protect those who are most vulnerable to severe illness. These recommendations are effective immediately and may be updated upon further evaluation and public health need.

We understand these recommendations will have a tremendous impact on the lives of people in our community. Public Health is making these recommendations in consultation with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), based on the best information we have at this time, to protect the public's health. This is a critical moment in the growing outbreak of COVID-19 in Santa Clara County when such measures can potentially slow the spread of the disease. The following guidance was created after significant deliberation. Health officials weighed the potential benefits to our community's health along with the significant disruptive effect that these recommendations could have. In consultation with the CDC, we developed these recommendations based on the rising number of cases in our County and the importance of taking these actions now to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

New Guidance for workplaces and businesses

Employers should take steps to make it more feasible for their employees to work in ways that minimize close contact with large numbers of people.

Employers should:

- 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.
- Not require a doctor's note for employees that are sick as healthcare offices may be very busy and unable to provide that documentation right away.
- Consider use of telecommuting options for appropriate employees.
- Consider staggering start and end times to reduce large numbers of people coming together at the same time.

New Guidance for Persons Hosting Mass Gatherings and Large Community Events

At this time, we recommend postponing or canceling mass gatherings and large community events where large numbers of people are within arm's length of one another.

If you can't avoid bringing groups of people together:

- Urge anyone who is sick to not attend.
- Encourage those who are at higher risk for serious illness to not attend.
- Try to find ways to give people more physical space so that they aren't in close contact as much as possible.
- Encourage attendees to follow increased hygiene, such as:
 - Washing their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used in a pinch
 - Avoid close contact with other people
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
 - Covering their cough or sneeze with a tissue - if available - or into their elbow
- Clean surfaces with standard cleaners.

Guidance for people at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness

The County Public Health Department is recommending that persons at higher risk of severe illness should stay home and away from crowded social gatherings of people as much as possible such as parades, conferences, sporting events, and concerts where large numbers of people are within arm's length of one another.

Those at higher risk include:

- People over 50 years of age. 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.

Guidance for Schools

The County Public Health Department is not recommending closing schools at this time. If a staff member or student in a specific school confirmed to have COVID-19, the Public Health Department will consider, based on the specific facts and circumstances of that case, whether closure of that school is warranted. The reason we are not recommending school closures at this time is because children have not been shown to be a high-risk group for serious illness from this virus. As much as possible, children should be allowed to carry on with their education and normal activities.

We encourage all school officials to carefully review and follow the CDC's guidance for K-12 schools and childcare centers, as well as our recommendations for mass gatherings and large events. We are aware that schools in our community may need to make decisions about postponement or cancelation of specific activities.

Some children have underlying health conditions, such as weakened immune systems, that put them at higher risk. Caregivers of children with underlying health conditions should consult with healthcare providers about whether their children should stay home.

Guidance for people who are sick

Stay home when you are sick. Do not go out in public when you are sick. Avoid medical settings in general unless necessary. If you are ill in any way call your doctor's office first before going in and let them know your symptoms.

Guidance for the general public

- Even if you are not ill, avoid visiting hospitals, long term care facilities, or nursing homes to the extent possible. If you do need to visit one of these facilities, limit your time there and keep 6 feet away from patients and employees of the facility.
- **Do not go to the emergency room unless essential.** Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical needs. If you have symptoms like cough, fever, or other respiratory problems, contact your regular doctor first.
- Stay home when sick and away from others in your household.
- Practice excellent personal hygiene habits, including washing your hands with soap and water frequently, coughing into a tissue or your elbow, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Stay away from people who are ill, especially if you are at higher risk for serious illness.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects (like doorknobs and light switches). Regular household cleaners are effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth unless you've just washed your hands.
- Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of fluids, eat healthy foods, and manage your stress to keep your immunity strong.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.
 - CDC does **not** recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
 - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for [health workers](#) and [people who are taking care of someone in close settings](#) (at home or in a healthcare facility).
- Stay informed. Information is changing frequently. Check and subscribe to Public Health's website and social media pages:

Public Health Website: <http://sccphd.org/coronavirus>

Public Health Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sccpublichealth/>

Public Health Instagram: @scc_publichealth

Public Health Twitter: @HealthySCC