

All Santa Clara County residents should get vaccinated and follow State guidelines to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines allow us to engage in relationships, sex and everything in between more safely. Try using these steps to reduce the risk to yourself, your partners, and our community.



1. Get Vaccinated.

Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is the best way to protect yourself and your partners.

- The FDA has authorized three COVID-19 vaccinations that have been shown to be safe and effective at preventing COVID-19 infection and serious disease.
- Vaccines are authorized and available for all Californians age 5 and older.
- All COVID-19 vaccines are free and are provided regardless of insurance or immigration status.
- For information on how to get vaccinated, go to www.sccfreevax.org.

Talk to your partners about their vaccination status.

- People who are fully vaccinated are unlikely to get or spread COVID-19, and they are extremely unlikely to develop serious illness if they do get sick.
- Waiting to have sex until you and your partners are fully vaccinated can significantly reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading.



2. Know how COVID-19 spreads.

COVID-19 spreads by breathing in air while close to an infected person.

- COVID-19 most often spreads by breathing in air while close to an infected person. When an infected person talks, coughs, shouts, sings, or even just breathes, they breathe out small particles that contain the virus. These particles can be breathed in by other people.

We still have a lot to learn about COVID-19 and sex.

- We do not know if COVID-19 can be spread through vaginal or anal sex. We know that other coronaviruses do not easily spread through sex. This means sex is not likely a common way that COVID-19 spreads.
- Kissing and sexual intercourse require close contact with another person. If you or your partner(s) are not vaccinated, these activities could spread COVID-19 through saliva or breathing in air containing virus particles.



3. Skip sex if you or your partner are not feeling well. Do they have symptoms, or have they had symptoms in the last 14 days?

- Most people with COVID-19 have symptoms, but people can spread the virus even if they do not have symptoms. Fever, cough, sore throat, and difficulty breathing are symptoms to ask about.
- Close contact during sex can easily pass the virus, especially if you and your partner are not vaccinated. If you don't feel well or even start to feel unwell, avoid kissing, sex or any close contact with others. For more information visit sccgov.org/coronavirus and search [COVID symptoms](#).



4. Have they been diagnosed with COVID-19?

- People who have recovered from COVID-19 at least 10 days from the day their symptoms started (or their positive test was taken) and who have not had fever for at least 24 hours are unlikely to spread the virus.



5. Safer sex tips if you or your partners are not vaccinated.

- **You are your safest sex partner.** If you have not been fully vaccinated, the safest sexual activity is masturbation. Self-pleasure will not spread COVID-19, especially if you wash your hands (and any sex toys) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after.
- **Communicate with your partner(s) virtually** Cybersex or sexting is a great alternative for when your partner(s) live in a different household.
- **Pick partners you trust and who are vaccinated.** Limit your sex partners to people you live with or who are in your social bubble. If you do have sex with people outside of your household, have as few partners as possible, pick partners you trust and who are vaccinated. Talk about COVID-19 risk factors, just as you would discuss PrEP, condoms, and other safer sex topics.
- **Wear a face covering or mask.** Maybe it's your thing, maybe it's not, but during COVID-19 wearing a face covering that covers your nose and mouth is a good way to add a layer of protection during sex.
- **Kissing can easily pass the virus.** Avoid or limit kissing if symptomatic or not vaccinated.
- **Make it a little kinky.** Be creative with sexual positions and physical barriers, like walls, that allow sexual contact while preventing close face to face contact.
- **Masturbate together.** Use physical distance and face coverings to reduce the risk.
- **Condoms and dental dams can reduce contact with saliva, semen, or feces** during oral or anal sex. But unlike other STIs, condoms may not be sufficient to protect against COVID-19, since fingers in contact with infectious particles can transmit the virus when they touch your mouth or eyes.
- **Washing up** before and after sex is more important than ever.
 - Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - Wash sex toys with soap and warm water



6. Prevent HIV, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancy.

- **The Crane Center:** Call **408-792-3720** (Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) to get more information about making an appointment for STI/HIV testing or visit [GetTestedSCC.org](https://www.gettested.sccphd.org)
- **Condoms:** Condoms help prevent unintended pregnancy, STIs and HIV. Visit the Crane Center for FREE condoms and lube. For hours and location go to [GetTestedSCC.org](https://www.gettested.sccphd.org) or call **408-792-3720**.
- **PrEP:** Taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and having an undetectable viral load all help prevent HIV transmission and acquisition. For more information on PrEP, visit [PrepLiberating.org](https://www.prep.sccphd.org).



Get more information on COVID-19.

- County of Santa Clara Public Health Department webpage: www.sccphd.org/coronavirus
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention webpage: www.cdc.gov

For the latest information, visit [sccphd.org/coronavirus](https://www.sccphd.org/coronavirus) or [cdc.gov/covid19](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19). The County of Santa Clara Public Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.

This guide has been adapted from NYC Health Department's "Safer Sex and COVID-19" https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/covid-sex-guidance.pdf?utm_source=morning_brew and The Fenway Institute's "COVID-19 and Your Sexual Health" <https://fenwayhealth.org/fenway-health-releases-guide-to-covid-19-and-your-sexual-health/>