



With widespread person to person community transmission of COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) in the New York metropolitan area, we want to advise and reinforce on **social distancing to protect from the virus**. This Advisory is provided so essential support personnel can take crucial measures to keep the virus from spreading further.

### What is social distancing?

Social distancing is deliberately increasing the physical space between people to avoid spreading illness. Individuals need to stand at least 6 feet (approximately 2 meters) apart to limit virus spread.

### Why is social distancing important?

Research indicates that respiratory droplets from an individual do not travel farther than 6 feet. By staying at least six feet away from other people, you will decrease your chances of catching or spreading COVID-19. Social distancing is important to consider in the workplace, at home, and in your neighborhood.

### How can I best protect myself while at work?

- Social distancing - maintain at least 6 feet of separation from others - when possible. This is the safe distance for conversations and any interaction.
  - When time clocking in or out, in the locker or break room, participating in small huddles - maintain 6 feet from your coworker in front and behind.
  - Shift an in-person meeting to a phone or conference call.
- Practice essential prevention hygiene: frequent handwashing, cough/sneeze into your elbow or a tissue (throw away); frequently sanitize high-touch surfaces including touchscreens; avoid touching your face with unwashed hands; wave/elbow bump instead of shaking hands; do not share food or drink.
- Stay home if you are sick.

### How to protect myself at home and if I need to move about the neighborhood?

- Keep activities limited to your immediate family.
- Postpone social gatherings or even "drop by" visits.
- Avoid crowded places. Do not enter crowded grocery stores, wait outside for others to leave before entering. Maintain at least 6 feet on either side of the check-out line.
- If an elevator is crowded, wait for the next one or take the stairs if you are able.
- In general, even if you are not feeling sick, stay home when not working as much as possible and practice social distancing.

**If you have symptoms (cough, fever, shortness of breath, sore throat)**, stay home, contact your supervisor and be guided accordingly. If symptoms are mild, you do not need to seek medical care. If you are a member of a higher risk group or your symptoms are severe, such as difficulty breathing, contact/call your primary care provider (PCP). Many providers have a virtual care platform, telehealth or telemedicine, so that a patient can meet with a provider by video or telephone. Avoid contact with others, and if sick and you need to leave your home, put on a face mask. In about 80% of cases, symptoms resolve by themselves with supportive care (including rest, fluids, and taking fever reducing medications such as Tylenol).

**Additional information available at <https://preparedness.columbia.edu/>.**

