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# Safe outdoor activities during the COVID-19 pandemic

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## Safe outdoor activities during the COVID-19 pandemic

**The COVID-19 pandemic doesn't have to halt all of your outdoor fun. Here are several fun outdoor activities you can still enjoy.**

[By Mayo Clinic Staff](#)

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has affected activities for many people. Public health restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have led to canceled festivals, concerts and other events. Many vacations and large celebrations have been limited or put on hold.

Despite the changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there's still plenty of fun to be had. In fact, seeking out fun activities may be even more important now. Doing something you enjoy can distract you from problems and help you cope with life's challenges.

When activities are near where you live and allow plenty of space between you and others, outdoor activities pose a lower risk of spread of the COVID-19 virus than indoor activities do. Depending on the weather where you live, various activities may be available.

### Why choose outdoor activities?

The COVID-19 virus is primarily spread from person to person among those in close contact, within about 6 feet (2 meters). The virus spreads through respiratory droplets released into the air when talking, coughing, speaking, breathing or sneezing. In some situations, especially in enclosed spaces with poor ventilation, the COVID-19 virus can spread when a person is exposed to small droplets or aerosols that stay in the air for minutes to hours.

When you're outside, fresh air is constantly moving, dispersing these droplets. So you're less likely to breathe in enough of the respiratory droplets containing the virus that causes COVID-19 to become infected. But be sure to wear a mask when you can't maintain distance from others.

Being outside offers other benefits, too. It offers an emotional boost and can help you feel less tense, stressed, angry or depressed. And sunlight can give your body vitamin D, too.

## Low-risk ways to move more

Coming into close contact with people who don't live with you increases your risk of being exposed to someone infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. That's why, in general, any activity that allows you to keep a social distance of at least 6 feet (2 meters) from others is lower risk.

There are many activities you can enjoy close to home, whether you're visiting your favorite public, state or national park, or just spending time in your neighborhood. While various activities may not be possible during some seasons, there are many ways to be active outdoors throughout the year. Get moving with these low-risk outdoor activities during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Walking, running and hiking
- Rollerblading and biking
- Fishing and hunting
- Golfing
- Rock or ice climbing
- Kayaking, canoeing, diving, boating or sailing
- Skiing, including cross-country and downhill skiing
- Ice skating
- Snowboarding
- Sledding
- Snowshoeing
- Fitness classes, held outside or virtually, that allow distance

Avoid crowded sidewalks and narrow paths and choose routes that make it easy to keep your distance. Wear a mask when you can't maintain at least 6 feet (2 meters) from people you don't live with. Don't wear a mask during activities in which it might get wet, such as swimming.

And don't let cold weather stop you from being active outdoors! Dress in layers and protect your head, hands and feet. Then head outside for a winter hike or go cross-country skiing. And aim to keep a positive mindset about winter. This may help you to enjoy the season and winter activities more.

## Low-risk social activities

Depending on your location and the weather, many other outdoor activities can be good choices, too:

- **Picnics.** Pack food from home. Or pick up takeout from your favorite restaurant or food truck. In some places, you might be able to get your food delivered to you. Take it to enjoy at your favorite public park, or eat out on your patio or deck.
- **Outdoor farmers markets.** Wear a mask and maintain a social distance of at least 6 feet (2 meters) from others.
- **Drive-in movies.** The COVID-19 pandemic has launched a drive-in movie theater comeback in the U.S. It's something many people can enjoy together with plenty of physical distance.

## Low- to moderate-risk outdoor activities

Depending on how they're done, many popular outdoor activities also can be safe. While some of these may not be available in all seasons and locations, take advantage of them when the weather permits. Some ideas include:

- **Restaurant patio dining.** When the weather is appropriate to be outside, patio dining can be a good outdoor option. Outdoor patio dining at uncrowded restaurants where patio tables are spaced appropriately is safer than indoor dining. Wear a mask when not eating or drinking. In other areas of the restaurant, keep a distance of at least 6 feet (2 meters) from others. Avoid self-service food and drink options. And remember to wash your hands when you enter and leave.
- **Camping.** If you only have close contact with people you live with, camping is low risk. If you camp with people who don't live in your household, camp in separate tents spaced at least 6 feet (2 meters) apart and avoid sharing camping supplies, including food and drinks. Pack hand soap, hand sanitizer and supplies to clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces.
- **Swimming pools and beaches.** Close contact of less than than 6 feet (2 meters) from others — not water itself — can make these activities risky. If you go to the beach and come into close contact with others, your risk is higher. Water itself doesn't spread the COVID-19 virus to people.
- **Gathering with small groups of friends.** When meeting outdoors in small groups, allow for social distancing between people from different households and skip the hugs and handshakes. Plan activities that don't require close contact, such as sidewalk chalk for kids and games like Frisbee. And remember to wear masks and bring hand sanitizer.

Remember that just getting together for a chat at a safe distance can offer a valuable opportunity to be with people you care about — and boost your mood at the same time.

- **Boating with friends.** Canoeing, kayaking or rowing with people who don't live in your household is riskier than doing these activities with only those from your own household.
- **Barbecues, campfires and outdoor potlucks.** Grill out on the patio. Or if the weather is cool, bundle up in warm clothes and sit around a fire pit. Keep your gathering small, maintaining social distance from others. Plan activities that don't require close contact. You may even choose to have everyone bring his or her own food and drinks to enjoy the togetherness with less chance of virus spread. Wear a mask when not eating or drinking. And wash your hands when you arrive and leave the gathering.
- **Sports and sporting events.** Contact sports, such as wrestling and basketball, carry more COVID-19 risk than do other sports. Team sports such as tennis, baseball, softball and soccer pose less risk because players can maintain physical distance. It's important for spectators, players and coaches to keep social distance. Wear a mask, use hand sanitizer and ensure you have enough social distance — at least 6 feet (2 meters) — between you and other spectators, whether you're standing, sitting in chairs or sharing bleachers.

## High-risk outdoor activities

Bringing many people together in close contact for a longer period of time poses the highest risk of COVID-19 spread.

Examples include:

- **Large gatherings.** Being in large gatherings or crowds of people where it's difficult to stay spaced at least 6 feet (2

meters) apart poses the highest risk. The larger the group and the longer people are together in these situations, the higher the risk. Weddings, festivals and parades are examples.

- **Youth camp activities.** Camps are generally high risk because campers come from different locations and spend a lot of time together indoors, in close contact.

Camps can pose less risk if campers are from the same area, don't share objects, wear masks and spend time outdoors with at least 6 feet (2 meters) between them.

- **Playgrounds.** The many frequently touched surfaces of playground equipment make it easier to spread the virus that causes COVID-19. However, in many areas, parks and playgrounds are open. Children who use playground equipment should maintain distance from others, avoid touching their faces and wash their hands afterward to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

## Think safety and enjoyment

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it's important to take care of yourself and those around you. Practice precautions such as washing your hands often, not touching your face, avoiding close contact of less than 6 feet (2 meters) with others and wearing a mask when you can't avoid being near other people. These steps are especially important for those with a higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

At the same time, well-being also includes doing things that make life worth living. With the right information, you can make thoughtful choices about ways to bring a sense of normalcy and joy to your life during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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