

# Is it safe to go to the pool, lake or beach during coronavirus?

## What we know

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Is it safe to invite people over for a pool party, or go to the beach or lake? With lockdown rules and recommendations fluctuating across the US while coronavirus cases continue to spike, there's reason to ask how busy beaches and public swimming pools could contribute to heightening this wave of the pandemic.

Both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization say the main way for the virus to spread is from an infected person to another person through respiratory droplets, which typically happens when they are within six feet of each other. Other experts believe the virus is airborne and can spread in tiny particles through the air from person to person, especially indoors with little ventilation.

So what does that mean for you -- can the virus survive in natural and human-made bodies of water and infect others? Is it safe to be outside with others you don't live with? Here's what we know about the coronavirus and the water you swim in. This article provides an overview and isn't intended as medical advice. It updates frequently with new information drawn from the CDC, state and county guidelines and experts in the medical community.

**Is it safe to swim in a public pool?**

While many public pools have decided to keep their doors closed until further notice, others have already opened. The CDC says [there's no evidence](#) the coronavirus can spread to people through pool water and that proper cleaning with chlorine or bromine should inactivate the virus if it's in the water.

So why are pools remaining closed if there's no evidence of the virus spreading through the water? Because of human behavior. While the coronavirus may not spread easily *through* pool water, say if someone spits out a big mouthful they accidentally almost swallowed, it could still infect people in close range when heads are out of the water.

For example, a group of people chatting in the shallow end, or playing a pool game may be more likely to acquire the virus from their companions' breath or saliva (e.g., through shouting to be heard at a noisy pool) than from the water itself.

In addition, pools, especially public ones, contain high-traffic areas and surfaces that are touched often, like the railing on the steps to get out of the pool or any doors to enter the premises. The principle of [social distancing](#) is to keep people far enough away so someone who may not know they're infected doesn't pass the virus on to another person, or a group of people. Bathrooms, lunch lines, shady indoor areas and any place where people come in close proximity can increase your risk.

### **What about the lake or beach?**

Before you even think about going to the lake or beach, you need to see if there are any new local or [state restrictions](#) in your area. In some places, lakes and beaches are remaining closed to the public to help prevent the further spread of COVID-19. Many beaches in California are closed, for example, while others are only [open for active recreation](#) following physical distancing guidelines -- which may be enforced by lifeguards or a beach patrol vehicle. This means hanging out to relax, grill or picnic won't be permitted, especially in large gatherings.

If the body of water near you is open and you're planning on going, it's best to limit your group to the members of your household. If gatherings are allowed in your state, it's important that you limit the number of people you're spending time with so you can properly social-distance. This will help keep the [risk of seeing friends outdoors low](#).

CNET spoke with Andrew Janowski, an infectious diseases physician at Washington University. He said the water is safe as long as you social-distance from those you're not typically in close contact with. He also said if someone who is sick with the coronavirus is in the water, they are unlikely to transmit it to others. He added, "The water will dilute out these secretions, making it much more difficult for a sufficient number of viral particles to come into contact with you."

### **What if an infected person is in the pool or lake?**

While you may not know if another person swimming in the water is infected, it doesn't hurt to play it safe and keep your distance from others. Even if someone isn't showing symptoms, [asymptomatic people can still transmit the coronavirus](#).

### **Can I go on a boat on the lake with friends since we're outside?**

The understanding among experts is the coronavirus can spread more easily in enclosed, indoor areas where people are more likely to share the same air. And new studies suggest the [coronavirus is airborne](#) and can spread through the air.

Before agreeing to any boat plans with friends, first ask yourself these questions: Do they live with me? Are stay-at-home orders lifted in my state? Are gatherings permitted where I live?

If you answered no to any of these questions, it's safest to take a rain check on the invitation or keep the boat ride limited to the people in your household, if you're the one doing the inviting.

If you answered yes to these questions, ask yourself one more: Do I spend time with elderly people or anyone with a [compromised immune system](#)? Remember that staying healthy helps keep those around you healthy as well.

If you do go out on the water, use your best judgment and make sure you have enough equipment to make it easy for people to keep clean and distant. Some general tips: Don't load your boat to the max with friends sitting shoulder to shoulder. Discourage reusable cups and the sharing of drinks ("Here, taste mine!"). Keep disinfectant wipes, soap and hand sanitizer handy. As an extra precaution, you could [disinfect the surfaces](#) when the passengers disembark.

### **Do I need to wear a mask?**

The CDC recommends you [wear a face mask](#) or covering when social distancing is difficult. In this case, it could mean wearing a face mask when walking past a group of people to find an open spot to sit or while waiting in line at the restroom.

Some places, like the [Cocoa Beach Pier](#) in Florida, [require masks to be worn](#). The CDC advises that you [don't wear a mask when you're in the water](#) because it makes it difficult to breathe when the mask is wet.

Here's where you can [buy a face mask online](#), buy [face masks for kids](#) and even fancy face masks that [cost a whopping \\$100 or more](#).

### **Are the bathrooms safe to use?**

It's hard to say. Ask the facility or park how often the restrooms are cleaned. If it doesn't look like it has been cleaned in some time, you may feel more comfortable staying away. Wearing a face mask inside public restrooms is a smart precaution.

Also, make sure there's soap and running water, or that you have hand sanitizer ready. Use paper towels to dry your hands, if available, rather than a hand dryer that can blow particles in the air.

If there's a long line waiting to get in, stand at least six feet back from the person in front of you. Note that many public restrooms are remaining closed during this time.

## What you can do to help stay safe

In order to help keep yourself and others protected, we recommend following these guidelines:

- Bring your own lounge chair and towel.
- Don't let your kids share pool toys with others.
- Don't share your drinks with friends.
- Wash your hands often, if possible.
- Bring hand sanitizer or disinfecting wipes in case you have to touch any shared surfaces.
- Keep a six-foot distance from people who aren't within your household -- if you have to, you could even put two pool noodles lengthwise between each person.

While restrictions have loosened in many areas of the country, it's important that you know how to help keep yourself protected. Here are [16 tips to help you avoid the coronavirus when you go out in public](#), what we know about [how long the coronavirus will last and if there will be a second wave](#) and [what to do if you think you or someone you live with is infected with the coronavirus](#).

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