

There are clear steps to take to avoid getting COVID that should make you feel calm and empowered.
By Dr. David Price

1. Become a “hand Nazi.” Always know where your hands are and make sure they are clean all the time. Walk around with Purell. Use Purell after everything you touch. We know that if you keep your hands clean, you will not get this. The way you get this disease is by touching your face with dirty hands.
2. You must start working psychologically on the connection between your hands and your face. The most common way of getting this disease is sustained contact with someone who has it. You are with someone who has it, and then you touch your face. Atul Gawande, the well-known surgeon and author, has a recommendation to help you stop touching your face: wear masks. ANY MASK WILL DO. The mask will prevent you from getting COVID by helping you stop touching your face. When you leave your house, wear a mask. Doesn’t matter what kind. Just wear a mask that will help you stop touching your face. You can even wear a bandana. Medical masks – N95 masks – should be saved for healthcare workers who need them. The medical masks are necessary during procedures that produce aerosolized droplets, like intubation.
3. Do not stand too close to people. You are only going to get this disease by sustained person with someone who is sick or about to be sick (people shed virus for 2 days before they are symptomatic) and then touching your face with dirty hands. Don’t get too close to people. Wash your hands. Don’t touch your face.
4. You don’t have to be scared of the outside world or your neighbor. We have to receive deliveries. We have to go to the grocery store. But if you know that you are only going to get this disease by touching your face when your hands are dirty, or by standing too close to people, that is very liberating. Just maintain social distance and wash your hands and know where your hands are. Know what you touch. Wash what you touch. (I.e., wipe the handle of the cart or the basket at the grocery store because you will have sustained contact with it.)
5. Shrink your social circle. Have a very small circle of people you see in close contact. The people who are getting this are maintaining large circles. They are having too many contacts with too many people. You can go to the grocery store, but wash your hands and maintain distance. Don’t have a group of 10 people that you hang out with.
6. What do you do if you get the disease? The VAST MAJORITY of spread throughout the world is home transmission: husband to wife, sister to brother, etc. So you have to understand the rules: if you develop a fever but are otherwise fine, isolate yourself from your family. You don’t want sustained contact with the person who is sick. If possible, put the sick person in a separate room and use a separate bathroom. If that person must come forward and interact with the family in the home, limit the contact and follow the rules: that person must wash his hands and put on a medical mask before being in the presence of the rest of the family. Don’t have sustained contact. E.g., wash your hands, put on a mask, go the kitchen and eat, then wipe down all the areas you touched and go right back to your bedroom. If you have a vulnerable person in the household – like a 95-year-old grandma or a person who is going through chemo—you want to try to put that person in a different place if someone in the household gets sick. If there is nowhere else for that person to go, just be super-vigilant about following the rules and limit contact between the sick person and the vulnerable person to the maximum possible extent.

7. What if you think you're getting a cold? Should you ask for a test to see if it is a cold or COVID? No. At this point, COVID is so widespread, assume you have COVID if you get any kind of illness at all. Isolate immediately if you don't feel well. The biggest problem arises when people continue interacting with their family members because they don't have a fever and they assume they just have a cold. Then, two days later they get a fever and realize they have COVID and they've already infected the rest of the family. Isolate immediately if you are sick at all. If you feel better after 2 days and can say it was definitely just a cold, that's okay. But as soon as you are sick, assume it is COVID, and isolate. Just being in the home with a person who has COVID doesn't mean you are going to get sick – you will get sick if you touch a person or surface that is infected and then your face. Follow the rules and you can avoid getting COVID even if a family member has it.

8. When should I go to the hospital? Go only if you are short of breath. Don't go just because you are sick and your body aches. What happens at the hospital if you are short of breath? Some of the people who go to the hospital are put in a bed and don't require a ventilator. Only @ 10% of people who get COVID have to be admitted to the hospital. Most people in NYC who are showing up at the ER are being sent home. Only 1-3% need to be on a ventilator. What happens if you are put on a ventilator? The vast majority of people who go on a ventilator come off the ventilator after 7-10 days. Going to the hospital is not a death sentence and being on a ventilator is not either. Most people don't need a ventilator and, of the people who do need one, the majority come off the ventilator in 7-10 days.

9. There is almost no disease in kids from age 0 to 14. There are very few exceptions. Kids are not getting sick. Kids are not dying. Babies and infants don't get this and kids don't get this. Pregnant women get it, but they don't appear to get it any worse than anyone else. They are not seeing differences in how the disease affects pregnant women vs. other people.

10. Is it safe to go outside for a walk or run if you live in a city? Yes, but follow the rules. Purell your hands after you touch the elevator button. Don't touch your face. Run, walk, ride a bike – but stay 3-6 feet away from other people. Don't get sloppy. Follow the rules. Wear a mask. You don't need to wear a mask to keep you from getting the disease – you don't get the disease by walking around and breathing the air – but the mask will help keep you from touching your face. And if you don't have a mask, just wear a scarf or bandana. Again, the point is to help you stop touching your face. That's the point. This virus is "a wimp." It dies easily. A drop of Purell is good to kill it.

11. Do you have to wipe groceries down with disinfectant to bring them in the house? No, but wash your hands after touching the external bag/box. Don't have an extended interaction with the packaging. Unload your bag or box. Do not touch your face. Discard the packaging. Wash your hands. The groceries are okay. Don't high five the delivery man. In high transmission areas like NYC it is smart to just have the delivery person drop the groceries outside your door and avoid an in-person interaction. Should you take off your clothes and wash them after going to the grocery store? No need. Healthcare workers who have sustained contact with COVID patients have to remove clothes and follow procedures for that. Ordinary people who go to the grocery store can just wear their clothes and not worry.

12. This disease affects people in every age group other than 0-14. There was "an evil narrative" that took hold early in this disease that it only affects older people with heart disease and hypertension. That is NOT TRUE. This disease AFFECTS EVERYONE. They are seeing plenty of healthy young people who get very sick and are on ventilators. This is not to scare anyone, it is just to impress on everyone that you can't assume you won't get this because you are young and in good health. So follow the rules: wash

your hands, don't touch your face, and go to the hospital if you are short of breath. Practice social distancing.

13. Can you take ibuprofen to reduce fever? There is good data from Germany suggesting ibuprofen is not the best thing to take. You should take acetaminophen instead. Hospitals are no longer giving COVID patients ibuprofen.

14. Are people immune after they have the disease? Yes. The stories about people "rebounding" are people who have not fully resolved. Testing has shown that people shed the disease (i.e., spread it) starting 2-3 days before they show symptoms and continuing for 14 days. So, you may feel better but still be shedding the disease. By the same token, you may think you are better after 3 days and then feel bad again after 10 days, but you just didn't resolve the disease fully yet.

Keeping your hands clean and not touching your face will keep you from getting it in 99% of cases. We will need to practice social distancing for 6-9 months. There will be waves of this disease as people slack off on social distancing. The disease will weaken over time as more people have immunity.