



Position Statement Sexual Activity and COVID-19

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With so many people quarantined in their homes or living under shelter in place conditions, it is important to understand the ramifications of close contact, in particular with sexual activity. The International Society for the Study of Women's Sexual Health (ISSWSH) promotes safe sex, but that may mean something completely different during this pandemic. We support position statements developed by other sexual medicine societies on this topic. [View ISSM Statement](#)

Coronavirus spreads primarily through respiratory droplets. Those droplets can land on a person or on a surface which is then touched by another person. This means that saliva and mucus (oropharyngeal secretions) of an infected person can spread Coronavirus from a sneeze or cough, or a kiss to an uninfected person. Recently, scientists have detected the presence of viral RNA in feces, and since as many as 40% of infected individuals have gastrointestinal complaints, it is possible that the fecal/oral and fecal/nasal routes of transmission are also of concern.

While it is unknown as of this time whether Coronavirus can be transmitted through vaginal secretions, it is now known that the virus is present in the urine¹, and the semen² of men both acutely ill and recovering from COVID -19 infection. As of this writing, it is not known for how long the virus remains present in the semen nor whether the semen carries transmission risk².

Although we support the need for "safe sex" in terms of sexually transmitted infections, we do not yet understand the role that sexual activity may play in the spread of Coronavirus. However, it is certain that kissing, and oro-genital contact between Coronavirus discordant couples can transmit the virus. While social distancing is being actively practiced in public, in communities around the world people are turning to sexual activity for intimacy, comfort and stress relief during this unprecedented time. People may not show symptoms of infection right away or at all, and still be infected with the Coronavirus and therefore contagious, so even eating dinner with them or staying in the same room or bed with them may lead to transmission.

ISSWSH supports social distancing for all casual acquaintances, for discordant couples, or when either member of a couple is possibly infected. The new "really safe" sex in many cases may require "e-sex," (i.e. Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, etc.)

¹ Guan W, Ni Z-y, Hu Y, et al; China Medical Treatment Expert Group for Covid-19. Clinical characteristics of 2019 novel coronavirus infection in China. N Engl J Med. Published online February 28, 2020. doi:10.105

² Li D, Jin M, Bao P, Zhao W, Zhang S. Clinical Characteristics and Results of Semen Tests Among Men With Coronavirus Disease 2019. JAMA Network Open. 2020;3(5):e208292. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.8292