

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Deidre S. Gifford, MD, MPH  
Acting Commissioner



Ned Lamont  
Governor  
Susan Bysiewicz  
Lt. Governor

### COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions: Outdoor Recreation May 19, 2020

*Is it necessary to wear a mask or other face covering during recreational or other activities outdoors? Are there other measures that can be taken to protect yourself during outdoor recreation?*

Because the virus that causes COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) is a new virus, very little is known about the survival time of the virus outside of the body or what the risk of person-to-person transmission is outdoors. Although it is likely that the virus cannot survive as well on surfaces when exposed to certain environmental conditions (i.e. sunlight, wind, changes in temperature and humidity), the risk of person-to-person transmission from extended close contact with an infected individual remains high even in outdoor areas. As such, current infection control recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH) should be followed in either indoor or outdoor spaces where contact with individuals outside of your household can be reasonably expected.

**Social Distancing** is a control measure designed to break the chain of transmission by keeping individuals far enough away from each other that spreading virus droplets from person-to-person is not possible, or at least highly unlikely. In the case of outdoor recreation, this means:

- Do not engage in outdoor recreational activities with friends, neighbors, or other individuals outside of your household.
- Stay as close to home as possible. Do not travel long distances to parks or other recreation areas that may require additional stops along the way.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from other people at all times, if possible. Minimize the number and duration of contacts within 6 feet (ex. stepping off hiking trails to let others pass, passing others quickly and at a safe distance, minimizing contacts at bottleneck areas like trail heads, maintaining extra distance when following groups ahead of you).
- Avoid recreational areas that are crowded and where it will be difficult to maintain appropriate distance from other individuals or groups.



Phone: (860) 509-7293 • Fax: (860) 509-7295  
Telecommunications Relay Service 7-1-1  
410 Capitol Avenue, P.O. Box 340308  
Hartford, Connecticut 06134-0308  
[www.ct.gov/dph](http://www.ct.gov/dph)

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**Personal Hygiene** is a control measure designed to break the chain of transmission by avoiding transfer of virus from surfaces into your body (mucous membranes). For outdoor recreational activities, this means:

- Avoid touching surfaces in common areas as much as possible.
- Wash your hands with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds) or alcohol-based hand sanitizer frequently. Carry hand sanitizer with you if sanitary facilities are unavailable.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands, especially your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Follow good respiratory etiquette by coughing or sneezing into a tissue, a cloth handkerchief, or your shirt sleeve.

**Face Coverings** are a secondary control measure designed to break the chain of transmission by minimizing the amount of saliva droplets (via coughing, sneezing, talking) that leave the wearer's body and land on surfaces or other people.

If individuals are engaged in outdoor recreational activities either alone or with only their household members *and* they do not expect to have any contact with other individuals (ex. jogging or walking around relatively unpopulated neighborhoods, hiking in private wooded areas, fishing in an isolated area, etc.) then a face covering is not necessary.

However, if outdoor activities are planned in public spaces where contact with other individuals may be unavoidable (ex. busy neighborhoods, public hiking and biking trails, parks and beaches, etc.), then even when outdoors:

- Any person who is outside of their home and can reasonably expect to come into close contact with other individuals outside of their household should wear some type of face covering over the nose and mouth (ex. disposable surgical mask, cloth mask, scarf wrap/gaiter).
- Face coverings are designed to protect other people from droplets you may expel through normal activity. The effectiveness of this control method is maximized when everyone participates in covering their face in public (universal source control).

Please note that, pursuant to Governor Ned Lamont's [Executive Order 7BB](#), any person in a public place in Connecticut who is unable to or does not maintain a safe social distance of approximately six feet from every other person is required to cover their mouth and nose with a mask or cloth face-covering, unless doing so would be contrary to his or her health or safety because of a medical condition, a child in a child care setting, anyone under the age of 2 years, or an older child if the parent, guardian or person responsible for the child is unable to place the mask safely on the child's face.

Current public health data in Connecticut suggests that there continues to be a risk of individuals becoming infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 from contact with people outside of their household. However, we also recognize the benefits of outdoor recreational activities to the health and well-being of the residents of our state, and the desire of individuals to engage in outdoor recreation as the weather warms.

Each of the control measures listed above is designed to help reduce the risk of person-to-person transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19, but the effectiveness of each will vary depending on personal health, situational, and environmental factors.

At this time, to minimize the risk of person-to-person spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 to the greatest extent possible, CDC and CT DPH recommend that anyone engaging in any activities outside of their home, in either indoor or outdoor areas, practice proper social distancing and personal hygiene and wear a face covering over the nose and mouth at all times when it can be reasonably anticipated that close contact with other individuals is unavoidable.