

3 Ways to Disrupt the Coronavirus Chain Reaction

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April 2020

Editor's note: The impact of the coronavirus pandemic is changing life day by day. Please visit HealthDiscovery.org/covid-19 frequently for updates to help you and your family manage the crisis.

The coronavirus chain reaction began with one infected human on the other side of the world and overran the planet in only a few months. Like a multiple-vehicle pileup on a crowded expressway, COVID-19 continues to spread because we get too close to each other.

We have power to break the coronavirus chain reaction by putting more distance between each other. This means staying home and limiting trips outside the home to picking up groceries and prescriptions or seeing the doctor for essential healthcare.

But people are social animals. Now that nearly all Americans are living under state stay-at-home orders¹, we can get a little antsy. Or bored, lonely, stir crazy and, sometimes...casting caution to the wind.

Consider this: if an adult daughter sneaks out of the house to visit her still-employed boyfriend while her parents tiptoe across town for a face-to-face chat with an elderly grandmother, grandma has now been exposed to the COVID-19 infected coworker who coughed on the daughter's boyfriend three days ago.

Violating a stay-at-home order is a coronavirus chain reaction in the making.

And just like an impending highway wreck, the consequences can be dire. Bottom line: social distancing works only if everyone in a household who goes out in public practices it every time, no exceptions.²

In addition to staying home and maintaining a minimum of six feet of distance between yourself and other humans when you have to venture outdoors, here are ways to break the coronavirus chain reaction:

1. Consider prescription and grocery delivery.

[Walgreens](#) offers delivery of medications, over-the-counter drugs, and grocery and personal items via Postmates. As of this writing, the pharmacy's website states that same-day deliveries are available for about 7,000 of its stores throughout the U.S.

[CVS](#) offers one- to two-day delivery of medications, groceries and personal care items for nearly all pharmacy locations using Shipt. Click on the links for Walgreens and CVS for ordering/delivery FAQs, and remember, you will pay a fee for the convenience of using Postmates and Shipt delivery services.

Smaller, locally owned pharmacies may also offer delivery in addition to typical drive-up-window pick-up. Regardless of the pharmacy you use, it is a pandemic best practice to arrange for a three-month supply of all maintenance drugs to minimize trips to the drug store and reduce deliveries to the home.

As for groceries, you can arrange to pick up your pre-packed order at a store or for the order to be delivered

to your home (via Shipt or Instacart, for example) for a fee. We've listed some major U.S. grocers that, according to their websites, provide at-home delivery and/or at-store pickup:

- [Target](#)
- [Walmart](#)
- [Kroger](#)
- [Publix](#)
- [Whole Foods](#)
- [HE Butt](#)
- [Albertsons](#)

Note: in many areas grocery delivery and/or at-store pickup times are hard to come by. Planning ahead and trying out multiple stores may help you to be more successful. For example, my husband and I use Publix for at-home delivery through Instacart and Walmart's at-store pickup. We order about two weeks of groceries at a time.

2. Clean items you bring into your home.

This suggestion comes with a caveat: opinions differ widely on whether sanitizing groceries and other stuff from the outside world is absolutely necessary, as well as how to clean those items. The Centers for Disease Prevention and Control ([CDC](#)) contends that there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19. The CDC also says the virus spreads between people who are in close contact with one another through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. This is why experts recommend social distancing, hand washing and regularly sanitizing high-touch areas as the best measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

But is it necessary to sanitize groceries? Dr. Jeffrey VanWingen, a Grand Rapids, Michigan, doctor says yes--during the healthcare crisis sanitizing is absolutely necessary to avoid catching coronavirus. He shares his ideas for grocery shopping and handling food items at home in a [YouTube video](#):

- Place non-perishable items in the garage or outdoors for up to three days.
- Set up non-sanitary and sanitary zones in the kitchen. Place the groceries on the non-sanitary zone and clean the packaging with a sanitary wipe before placing them in the sanitary zone.
- Throw away some packaging, like the cardboard boxes covering cereal.
- Wash produce in soapy water.

Another caveat: according to the [CDC](#), washing fruits and vegetables with soap, detergent or commercial produce wash is not recommended because their residue can stay on produce. The FDA has not evaluated the safety of residues left from soaps and detergents if ingested. Absent official guidance from the CDC or the FDA on the necessity of sanitizing groceries in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, I suggest that you do what you think is right for your family.

We clean every grocery item that comes into our house. Non-perishables sit in the garage for several days before we clean them with sanitizing wipes and bring them inside. We follow the YouTube doc's advice for setting up non-sanitary and sanitary places in the kitchen to use for cleaning packaging on perishables. I don't wash produce in soapy water but clean each item carefully with a veggie brush under running water. Then I wash my hands and clean door handles, counters, faucets...anything I've touched.

3. Be sure to stay connected.

Families and friends need to see our faces and hear our voices. That's why videoconferencing platforms like Zoom and Skype and phone apps like Facetime are lifelines in the age of COVID-19. The coronavirus chain reaction takes on a positive quality when we use these platforms to reach out and offer virtual hugs, laughter, guidance and encouragement. There's nothing quite like a computer screen full of smiling faces to ease anxiety.

Beyond the typical work meeting, people are hosting cocktail hours, weddings, birthday parties,

introductions between grandparents and newborn babies, christenings, worship services...if you can think of a reason to get together, it's probably being done on a videoconferencing platform. I'm going to host a cocktail hour with my clay sculpting friends in the next few days. I can't wait to see them.

We really don't know if we're in the darkest days of the healthcare crisis, or if those days are still ahead. Maintaining social distancing, limiting trips outside of the house and staying connected can help us all get to the other side of this crisis.

We're in this together. Stay safe out there.

#TogetherApart ■

¹[New York Times](#), "Which States and Cities Have Told Residents to Stay at Home"

²[Johns Hopkins Medical](#), "Coronavirus, Social and Physical Distancing and Self-Quarantine"