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# HFYH: Coronavirus and Pools, Beaches and the Outdoors

# Is it safe to swim in a hotel or community pool during the Coronavirus Pandemic? Can I safely go to the beach or enjoy other outdoor activities without risking exposure to Coronavirus?

Social distancing and wearing a mask are the norm today with the continued spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19). With the number of cases continuing to increase, and the number of deaths surpassing 160,000 in the United States and 712,000 worldwide, the new normal of distancing and masks will continue for the foreseeable future. A question frequently asked is what activities are safe from exposure to Coronavirus.

While COVID-19 has forced us to change so many aspects of our lives, there are still plenty of opportunities for fun. In fact, finding fun activities may be even more important during this pandemic. Doing something you enjoy can help give you a much-needed break from the ongoing stress of the day to help you cope with the challenges we all face.

During the summer and early fall, pools, beaches, and outdoor sports are popular activities. But it is important to understand the risks and plan your activities to minimize or eliminate the risk of being exposed to COVID-19.

## Are hotel pools or community pools safe?

According to the experts, the key to enjoying time in a pool all comes back to crowding. At hotels and community pools we often see large crowds at certain times of the day. Swimmers should avoid these times and only swim when they can ensure they will not be within 6 to 8 feet of others. Recommendations include wearing your face mask until you get into the water, staying upwind of others and making sure to wash your hands or use hand-sanitizer after holding high-touch surfaces in an around the pool (think pool ladders).

When not in the pool, place your chair at least six feet from others. We know that Coronavirus is primarily spread through airborne contact with droplets from someone's cough, sneeze, or breath. While the wind helps blow away droplets more quickly and increases dilution in the air, the six-feet social distancing practice is still important to reduce the chance of exposure.

# How does the risk for catching Coronavirus in pools differ from those in the ocean?

Both chlorinated water and saltwater in the ocean are unfriendly to the virus. Since chlorine is anti-viral, we do know that well-maintained pool water should kill Coronaviruses. The virus isn't going to survive in saltwater either as it will denature over an extended period of time. But it is not the water that swimmers should worry about; rather, it is the other people who may also be trying to enjoy the water. Masking and distancing are still the keys to reducing the chance of being exposed to Coronavirus. So even when you are in the water, whether a pool or the ocean, make sure you remain at least six feet away from others.

"The more spread out you are at a location, the safer it will be," said Ana Ferwerda, MD, FACOG

Medical Director of the C. L. Brumback Primary Care Clinics. "Another tip is to visit the pool or beach early in the morning or late in the afternoon to try to avoid any crowds."

# Does sunshine help to kill Coronavirus?

Sunshine provides minimal increased protection from Coronavirus. Coronavirus can live up to three days on many surfaces, like stainless steel and plastic, and even up to one day on cardboard and paper. Sunshine may reduce the amount of time the virus lives on surfaces, but should not be relied upon. Surfaces should be wiped with cleaners that are capable of killing Coronavirus and everyone should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer after touching surfaces.

# Outdoor Activities and Coronavirus

When taking part in outdoor activities, the fresh air around us is constantly moving, dispersing the droplets that carry Coronavirus. So, outdoor activities reduce the chance of being exposed to Coronavirus. Enjoying outdoor activities offers other benefits, too. The outdoors can provide an emotional boost and can help you feel less tense, stressed, angry or depressed.

Outdoor activities that allow you to keep a social distance of at least six feet from others are low-risk options. Many activities you can enjoy outdoors include visiting your favorite park, walking, running and jogging. Other lower-risk activities during the pandemic include:

- Hiking
- Fishing
- Golfing
- Kayaking, and
- Boating

You can feel confident that outdoor activities have relatively low risk of exposing you to Coronavirus as long as social distancing of at least six feet away from others is maintained and masking, hand-washing and hand-sanitizing are still followed.

# About the Health Care District

The Health Care District of Palm Beach County provides primary medical care, dental services and COVID-19 testing for adults and children at the C. L. Brumback Primary Care Clinics, health coverage programs for eligible uninsured residents, a pharmacy operation, a nationally-recognized Trauma System, registered nurses in nearly 170 public schools, short and long-term skilled nursing at the 5-star rated Edward J. Healey Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in Riviera Beach, and acute care at its teaching hospital, Lakeside Medical Center, which is accredited by The Joint Commission and serves the rural Glades' communities.

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