

## From our Registered Nurse:

### What to Know About Being Outside During the Pandemic

#### Is it safe to be outdoors?

**Being outdoors is usually significantly less risky than being indoors.** The water droplets that carry the coronavirus get quickly broken up the environment, such as blown away by the wind, or dried out by the sun. Being in a wide open space means that even if an infected person sneezes near you, the droplets can spread out so much that not enough of the virus will reach you to make you sick. There is also more room to spread out when outside so you can interact with people from a distance.

#### Will spending time outdoors make it less likely to catch the virus or make me recover faster?

**No.** The virus is vulnerable to sunlight while outside of your body, but the sun will not kill the virus while it is inside a person. Only your own immune system can do that. Spending time in the sun will not make you more resistant to the virus or reduce your symptoms if you have it. That said, regular fresh air, sunlight, and exercise are important to your health and getting outside regularly will improve your overall health.

#### Do I still need to wear a mask outdoors?

**You should wear a mask in busy public areas, this includes parks and streets.** In places where it's easy to keep distance, like walking in a quiet neighborhood or a large park, you won't need your mask on the whole time. When it gets hard to maintain physical distance, such as on a city street, put your mask on. If you are hiking in the woods, you do not need to wear a mask the whole time, but should bring one with you for busy areas such as lookouts and trailheads. You do not need to wear a mask in your own backyard. If you share a yard with other families, you should have a mask with you to be considerate of your neighbors, but do not need to put it on unless other people are using the area.

#### Can I use playgrounds etc.?

**You are more likely to get the virus from other people in the playground than the playground equipment.** We now know it is much less likely to contract the virus from an object than a person. If there is no one else using the equipment, it is probably safe for your children to use it. Avoid play structures that would keep children in close proximity for long periods of time. If you can, bring hand sanitizer with you to clean your children's hands after they finish playing. While the risk is lower, heavily used items like slides or monkey bars get touched by



# MassSupport Network

---

many children and could hold virus for a little while. Always make sure you wash your hands as soon as you come inside and avoid touching your face while outside.

## Is it okay to go running/biking?

**Yes.** While exercising, you will breathe heavier and put more droplets into the air. If you are running or biking, however, you will move past people too fast for them to catch much of your breath. It is still a good idea to plan your routes for less busy streets. You should also bring a mask with you that you can put on if you approach a crowded area or will be stopping for long.

## If outdoors is safer, why can't I go to a sporting event?

**While the virus spreads less easily outdoors, large gatherings are still risky.** Larger crowds increase the chances that at least one person present will be infected. People sitting near each other for long periods of time have a much higher risk of infection than people who are only in contact briefly. It is also very easy for even a person without symptoms to put out a lot of virus-carrying droplets while cheering. Tightly packed crowds allow the virus to spread very easily, even if it can't travel more than a few feet.

Updated 7/23/20

## Sources

<https://www.erinbromage.com/post/what-s-the-deal-with-masks>  
<https://www.erinbromage.com/post/the-risks-know-them-avoid-them>  
<https://www.mass.gov/news/wear-a-mask-in-public>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/visitors.html>  
<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/effects-of-sunlight-coronavirus>



For Statewide Assistance Call 888-215-4920

[www.masssupport.org](http://www.masssupport.org)