

HI-COVID - Coalition of Hawai'i Health Care Workers
Open Letter to the Community

HI-COVID, representing a cross section of health care workers and science professionals in Hawai'i, is encouraged by the solidarity seen across the islands—together, we are achieving a controlled spread of COVID-19 and are flattening the curve! With the rapidly-changing news on this virus, many have asked for advice on the best practices for minimizing your and your Hawai'i 'ohana's exposure to this contagious disease:

Keep Doing Your Part, Shelter In Place. Hawai'i is already seeing the product of our efforts in reducing contacts. Limiting contact to just your immediate household members, plus any essential work or errands, is key to exponentially reducing the likelihood of virus transmission. Find ways to worship from home.

Wear Masks and if possible eye protection, in stores, public transportation, or any time you encounter the public. A homemade mask is better than no mask, especially if everyone else also wears a mask.

Smart Approach to Errands. Consider appointing one household member, with the lowest health risks, to handle errands over the course of this health crisis. By just one (as opposed to two) going out for errands, your household will enjoy a 50% less likelihood of contracting or spreading the virus. Consolidate errands, make your trips to the store count, and when possible utilize the order-online-and-pick-up model. Do not congregate in parking lot, even if you run into friends. Upon return to your home avoid bringing in germs, by immediately washing your hands, or better yet immediately showering and putting your clothes in the hamper.

Hand Washing and High-Touch Surfaces continue to be key. Remember to disinfect your high-touch surfaces of your vehicle and home after being out in public.

Avoid High-Risk Activities. Recreational use of ATV's, dangerous hikes, even risky jobs around the house (e.g. tree felling, working on the roof) should be avoided. This is not the time to take up new risky hobbies (e.g. surfing, diving, downhill skateboarding). Even for those with extensive experience, reducing frequency is a supportive decision. Making these smart, conscientious decisions, helps you and your family avoid unnecessary doctor or hospital visits that could result in exposure to COVID-19. By safeguarding your health, you are also supporting respite for first responders and health care workers.

Exercising and Getting Outdoors can and should still be a part of every household's routine. Remember to maintain 6+ feet of distance, even if you are driving by someone out walking. By limiting your time swimming or walking at the beach to half an hour, you are making it possible for others—including those with heightened health risks—to also get outdoors and stay healthy.

Wellness Matters. If you were considering quitting smoking or vaping, now is the time. Remember the tenets of good health: lots of sleep, stay hydrated, exercise and maintain a nutritious diet. If your loved one struggles with mental health, find a way to reach out and be supportive from afar. And if you need support, there continue to be mental health care services available. It's okay to make the call.

We recognize each household is different—some with multiple essential workers, others are single-parent homes, etc.—but we call on you to make a difference: promote community health through as many of these strategic steps as possible! To ensure the best care to all those in need, Hawai'i's health care workers are making huge sacrifices in their personal and professional lives. Their efforts have and will not tire, despite the known, elevated risks to their own health. The modifications we recommend not only protect your health, they give our health care professionals much needed time for advancements in scientific research and development, as to better handle COVID-19.

No matter how few, the hardship for families who have lost a loved one to COVID-19 is unprecedented as they cannot bring together their loved ones to properly mourn. As we each grieve for the daily joys of life that we all miss right now, we know our efforts are worth it if we can prevent even one tragedy of this kind.

May our Hawai'i Nei, through its aloha spirit,
continue to maneuver this health crisis
with all the grace and dignity our people deserve.