

Overview

- Social distancing is an effective way to prevent contagious diseases from spreading.
- For example, it is likely that little can be done to treat patients in the first phase of an influenza pandemic, because there will not be sufficient medicines and a vaccine will not be available. The most important thing to do will be to **prevent influenza from spreading**.
- Other diseases for which social distancing is important include Ebola , Marburg fever , Lassa fever , measles , other respiratory infections, plague , MERS , and monkeypox .

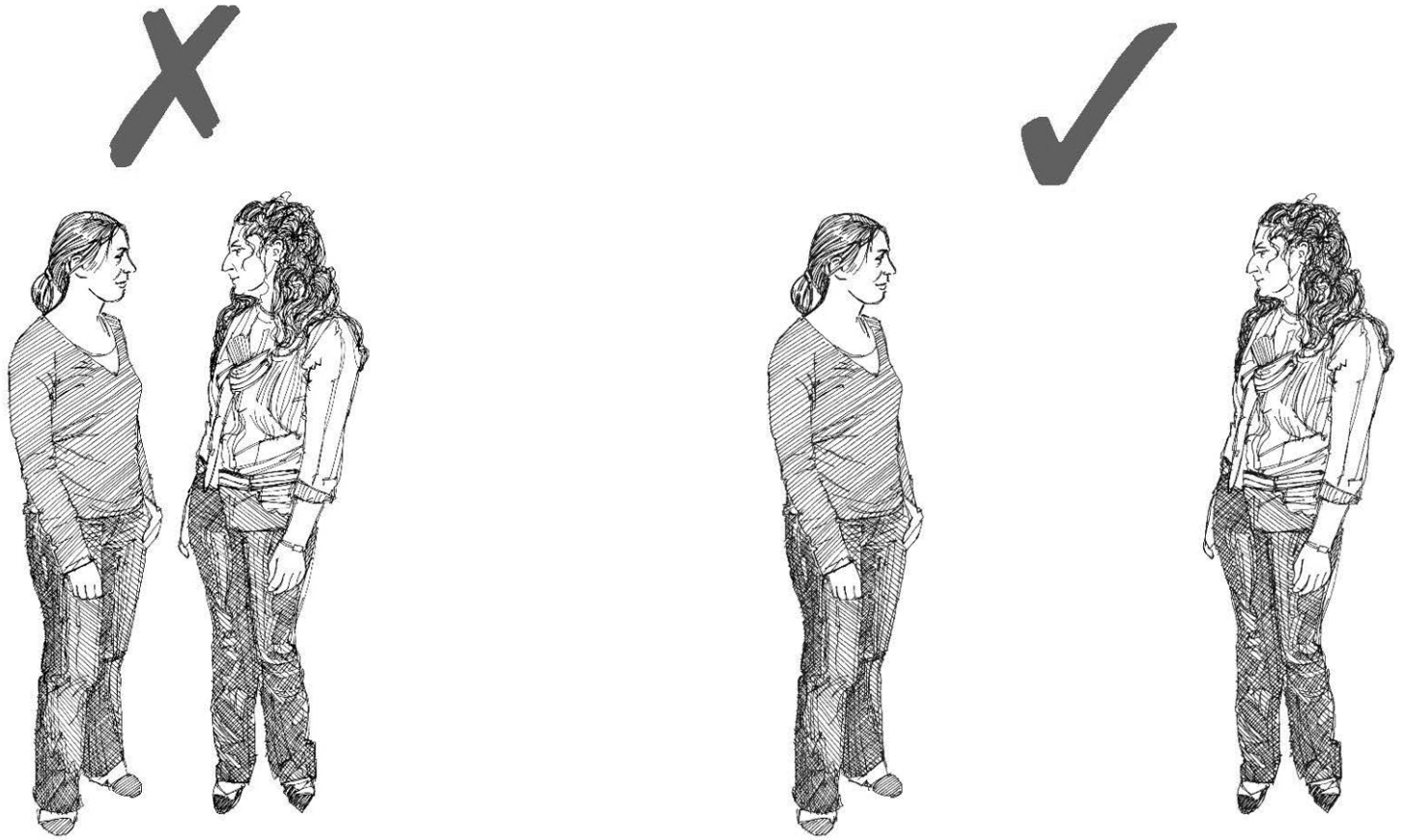


Coughing without covering your mouth spreads germs

What you need to know

- **Social distancing is the practice of keeping people at a safe distance from each other during outbreaks of highly contagious diseases.**
- Social distancing is one of the best ways to prevent very contagious disease from spreading.

- To prevent transmission when germs are being spread by droplets from coughing or sneezing, the sick person can follow coughing etiquette (see Action tool 26) and healthy people can keep at a safe distance from sick people and from one another.
- Someone who is closer than one metre to a person who is sick (with influenza, for example) may become sick from inhaling droplets they expel when they sneeze or cough.
- Social distancing is also about minimizing physical contact with other people. When people touch less, they are less likely to pass germs to each other. Avoid shaking hands, hugging, or kissing on the cheek.



Too close. Safe distance to keep apart.

Tips to protect yourself from diseases spread by coughing or sneezing

- In an epidemic or pandemic of a disease that can be transmitted through the air, always protect yourself by using the proper equipment. Wear a mask and gloves (see Action tool 5 and Action tool 6).
- Keep a distance of at least one metre from people who may be sick with Ebola , Marburg fever , Lassa fever , plague , MERS , monkeypox , measles and other respiratory diseases.
- Do not shake hands or touch people who may be sick with influenza. They may have coughed or sneezed into their hands and can then pass the germs on to you.
- In an outbreak of a highly contagious diseases (for example, Ebola), one way to prevent the spread of the disease is to discourage shaking hands or greeting people with hugs or kisses. It is important to explain this to the community, so that everyone understands and accepts that greetings and social behaviour must change during an epidemic.
- Use social mobilization and behaviour change communication to tell the community about the importance of social distancing. Help them to act in ways that stop them getting sick (see Action tool 3 ,

Community messages

See the following community messages to support social distancing:

21 - Social distancing