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**ADD YOUR
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TO THE
COVID FIGHT**
HELP VIRGINIA STOP COVID-19

Download Virginia's free **COVIDWISE** Exposure Notifications app to help protect your community while protecting your privacy.



Contact Tracing App

By Jay Siva

With the coronavirus pandemic rapidly increasing in the United States, contact tracing has become a necessity to stop the spread of the virus. On Wednesday, August 5, 2020, Virginia became the first state in the nation to directly create and launch a contact-tracing app developed by Google and Apple during the coronavirus pandemic. The contact-tracing app, COVIDWISE, relies on Bluetooth technology that can notify users if they were possibly exposed to someone with the coronavirus. COVIDWISE allows users to anonymously report positive COVID-19 test results, and alert other app users who've been near them.

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Instead of tracking the location of users, this app creates random sequences of numbers to inform users if they have been near someone with a positive test result. This emphasizes user identity and privacy concerns, while mitigating the spread of coronavirus in the process. Privacy has long been a controversial topic in contact tracing debates. In South Korea, for example, apps have been used to identify infected people and enforce mandatory quarantines. These apps directly track individual locations of all citizens and breach critical privacy and confidentiality. Thus, the Virginia Department of Health has been very conscious of protecting user identity while creating this app.

In the fast few weeks, marketing and advertising has been a key concern for the Virginia Department of Health. The purpose of the app would become obsolete if enough Virginia citizens don't take use of the app. State officials said they were launching a marketing and educational campaign to help inform the public about the app and dispel fear and misinformation. Some ways of marketing include reaching out to religious leaders and offering public health officials as guests on radio shows. The steps taken by Virginia have shown other states the value of this technology and have started creating their own apps. The state of Alabama also announced it's using similar technology from Google and Apple for an app designed to help with contact tracing on state university campuses.

Adjusting to the New Normal

By Brianna Ta



Due to the vast economic pressure and everyone's desire to return to "normal," state governments have been reopening, despite not meeting the guidelines recommended by the White House. Although many states have lifted restrictions and proceeded with reopening, public health officials warn the public to be cautious, especially considering the increase in COVID cases and deaths.



Everyday, people must face hard decisions and weigh the benefits versus consequences of going out. As we adjust to our new world, shaped by this pandemic, we must stay vigilant and keep everyone as safe as possible.

Below we will be answering some commonly encountered questions when considering whether or not to go out:

Is it okay to go to the beach?

According to Dr. Georges Benjamin, executive director with the American Public Health Association, there is nothing inherently risky about the beach, but he cautions people to avoid crowds and stay 6 feet apart (even in the water).



If we are all wearing masks, do we have to stay 6 feet apart?

Yes, maintaining a 6 foot distance is important, even with the added protection of a mask. Although masks decrease the amount of bodily fluid produced by your mouth and nose, they are not foolproof and can even have gaps (as masks do not perfectly fit your face). Additionally, coronavirus can be contracted through your eyes (which are not protected by masks).

Can I visit my family?

If your family members are in nursing homes or assisted living, you should definitely not visit as they are the most at risk to this virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveals that 8 out of 10 reported deaths from the coronavirus are among those 65 or older.

Even if your family is healthy, you may want to hold off since the virus affects people in unpredictable ways. Visitors could be infected and not even know it as scientists estimate 25% of people are infected and display no symptoms.

Considering these facts, a virtual gathering over Zoom, Skype, or other video calling software might be the best option. In spite of this, if you decide to visit your family, avoid close contact, such as kissing or hugging, which could easily spread the virus.



Can I visit the hair salon?

Over quarantine, people have been growing out their hair and may be considering visiting a hair salon. Many hair salon businesses have been taking precautions, such as limiting their occupancy, cutting outside, and disinfecting their equipment, but is it safe? We recommend being cautious and limiting conversation with your stylist, even if it feels a little rude.

Can I go out to a restaurant?

The CDC has made recommendations for restaurants, such as limiting capacity, spacing out tables, and requiring staff to wear masks, which helps prevent the spread of COVID. If you decide to eat out, you should consider who you are eating with. Another good option is getting takeout and eating in the comfort of your own home.

Would it be safe to travel?

You should exercise an abundance of caution and only go if you really need to, experts say. Although hotels are regularly cleaned and you could even bring your own wipes and pillows, there is always a chance you could get sick.

Regarding flights, even though airlines are taking steps to reduce the spread of COVID, there is very little research on the effect of air travel on COVID. Some studies indicate that the risk of contracting the virus is low, unless you are within two rows of the infected person, while others indicate that the risk could even spread out to several rows. If you decide to fly, maintaining social distancing while boarding and on the plane is paramount. Additionally, wearing a mask on the plane would further decrease your chances of catching COVID.

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