

## **HOUSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT TAKES ADDITIONAL STEPS TO SLOW SPREAD OF COVID-19, REDUCE NUMBER OF PEOPLE INFECTED**

The Houston Health Department is taking additional steps to protect the health of our community by making requirements and recommendations meant to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and reduce the number of people infected.

**Effective March 17, 2020 at 8 a.m.:**

- **Bars and nightclubs in the city of Houston must cease operations for 15 days.**
- **Food service establishments in the city of Houston must cease on-site dining service for 15 days.**

Restaurant carry-out, delivery and drive-thru service, third-party delivery services, and grocery stores are not affected by the requirements.

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The Houston Health Department broadened its COVID-19 social distancing guidance for the general public. The department now **recommends all Houstonians stay away from groups of ten or more people where there will be close contact with others.**

### **Guidance for all Houstonians**

- Avoid gatherings of 10 or more people.
- Avoid eating or drinking in bars, restaurants, and food courts – use drive-thru, pickup, or delivery options.
- Avoid discretionary travel, shopping trips, and social visits.
- Do not visit nursing homes or retirement or long-term care facilities unless to provide critical care situations.
- Practice healthy hygiene habits:
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
  - Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw the tissue away. If you don't have a tissue, use the elbow of your sleeve. Don't use your hands to cover coughs and sneezes.
  - Avoid close contact with people who are sick, especially if you are at higher risk for coronavirus.
  - Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of fluids, eat healthy foods, and manage your stress to keep your immunity strong.
- Work or engage in schooling from home whenever possible.
- Even if you are not ill, avoid visiting hospitals, long-term care facilities or nursing homes to the extent possible. If you do need to visit one of these facilities limit your time there and keep six feet away from patients.
- If you work in a critical infrastructure industry, as defined by the Department of Homeland Security, such as healthcare services and pharmaceutical and food supply, you have a special responsibility to maintain your normal work schedule. You and your employers should follow CDC guidance to protect your health at work.



- Stay informed. Information is changing frequently. Visit [HoustonEmergency.org/covid19](https://HoustonEmergency.org/covid19) frequently for updates.

People at higher risk include:

- People 60 and older.
- People with underlying health conditions including heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes.
- People who have weakened immune systems.
- Pregnant women.

Caregivers of children with underlying health conditions should consult with healthcare providers about whether their children should stay home. Anyone who has questions about whether their condition puts them at risk for novel coronavirus should consult with their healthcare providers.

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### Guidance for workplaces and businesses

Employers should take steps to make it more feasible for their employees to work in ways that minimize close contact with large numbers of people.

Employers should:

- Maximize telecommuting options for as many employees as possible.
- Urge employees to stay home when they are sick and maximize flexibility in sick leave benefits.
- Consider staggering start and end times to reduce large numbers of people coming together at the same time

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### Guidance for people who are sick

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Do not go out in public when you are sick.
- Avoid medical settings in general unless necessary.
- If you are ill in any way, call your doctor's office first before going in.
- **Do not go to the emergency room unless it's a medical emergency.** Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical needs.
- If you have symptoms like cough, fever, or other respiratory problems, contact a healthcare professional. You must call ahead before going.

*Updated: March 16, 2020*

