

## Physical Distancing Remains Critical to Containing COVID-19

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Strong policies, such as stay at home orders, closure of non-essential businesses, and promoting education about the importance of physical distance, are essential to maintaining the distancing protocols recommended by public health and medical professionals to control the spread of COVID-19. **Maintaining physical distancing will be one of the most effective tools for controlling COVID-19 until there are effective treatments and a protective vaccine.**

Easing strict physical distancing rules should be done on a systematic, progressive basis. IDSA and HIVMA [issued recommendations](#) with incremental steps to ease physical distancing measures and reduce the risk of a resurgence of cases, increased deaths, incapacitated health care facilities, and prolonged economic hardships. A full description of phases for reopening and associated policy recommendations [are online](#) and are summarized below. The phases below and accompanying recommendations should be considered in reviewing the White House and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [three-phased approach](#) for re-opening the country.

### Phases to Reopening

1. Widespread availability of testing, surveillance and contact tracing. *Contact tracing is the practice of identifying, testing and isolating persons who have had contact with individuals with COVID-19 or another communicable disease.*
2. Availability of sufficient testing, testing supplies and public health workers to diagnose, treat and ensure that individuals with COVID-19 can safely isolate.
3. Ability to ramp up supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) and critical care resources to respond to case surges.
4. Ongoing appropriate physical distancing measures (smaller gatherings, masks in public places, etc.) to prevent recurrent outbreaks.
5. Full lifting of physical distancing restrictions, such as allowing large public events like sporting events and concerts, when effective treatment and a protective vaccine are available.
6. Rebuild and enhance U.S. pandemic preparedness including R&D, infrastructure, workforce, and governance.

### What's Happening in Your State

- [State Data and Policy Actions to Address Coronavirus](#) (Kaiser Family Foundation)
- [CovidActNow](#) (Projections by state on how COVID-19 is spreading and affecting hospital capacity)

### Take Action

IDSA and HIVMA have created an action alert to [email](#) and [tweet](#) your governor and urge them to keep physical distancing measures in place until the medical evidence indicates it is safe to lift them.

### Physical Distancing and Past Pandemics

Physical distancing measures have been critical to controlling other outbreaks and pandemics:

- An estimated [675,000 deaths](#) in the U.S. were attributed to the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic that claimed about 50 million lives worldwide. [U.S. cities that implemented distancing measures](#) early and implemented multiple measures, such as school closures and a ban on public gatherings, had lower death rates.
- During the [2009 H1N1 pandemic](#), Mexico saw a decrease in cases that coincided with government social distancing policies and school closures.
- [Simultaneous introduction of a variety of social distancing and hygiene measures](#) were associated with dramatic declines in new SARS cases in 2003.