

What Outdoor Activities are Safe to Do During the Coronavirus Pandemic?

With government and public health experts urging more Americans to stay home to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus, many are desperate to get outside. Under the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, you can still walk, run, bike and hike outside, as long as you take the proper precautions.

Stay-at-home orders permit people to leave the house for essentials, such as a trip to the doctor, pharmacy or grocery store, or to get some fresh air — as long as they aren't sick with COVID-19 or experiencing symptoms of the disease — and maintain the 6-foot social distancing recommendation. But when so many people are dealing with cabin fever, and with few places to go, walking paths, hiking trails and outdoor recreation areas can easily become inundated.



Be sure to follow the latest mandates in your area as they evolve. Stick to doing outdoor activities alone or with members of your household. Wear sunglasses to shield your eyes from respiratory droplets, but you do not need to wear a mask (though some may choose to anyway).

What outdoor activities are safe to do right now? And how can you do them while taking the proper precautions? Here's how to enjoy the outdoors while keeping yourself and those around you healthy:

Walking



After you've been cooped up awhile, taking a walk outside can do wonders for your physical and mental health. Opt for less-traveled paths or go during off-hours to minimize contact with others.

"This activity is the most easily accessible, but it may be difficult to maintain distance in more densely populated areas," said Nagrani, medical director for Heal. "Going early in the morning can reduce the likelihood of passing others during your outing."

If you're strolling through a park (that is, if they're still open in your neck of the woods), avoid using the public restrooms or other shared facilities if you can.

"Remember, the virus can survive on surfaces for quite some time, even the benches," said Dr. Lynette Charity, an anesthesiologist and speaker. "Carry hand sanitizer and wipes. Wash your hands immediately once you've returned home."

Running

If you abide by the same guidelines noted above, going for a jog is another option that's generally safe right now.

"And please, no spitting or blowing snot out of your nostrils while engaged in these activities," Charity said. "You know who you are. Suppress the urge. The virus can be in the postnasal drip you expel via your nostrils or by spitting."

Hiking

"Many parks remain open and offer space to be outdoors," Nagrani said. "Plus, being out in nature can provide additional stress relief."



For the time being, stick to less strenuous hikes. You don't want to twist an ankle or get an injury that's going to land you in the emergency room when health care resources are already limited.

Biking

As long as you're steering clear of crowded routes, taking a bike ride is a good way to blow off some steam. "Carrying a water bottle on the bike will prevent the need to stop somewhere more crowded to hydrate," Nagrani said.

Similarly, you can rollerblade, skateboard or ride a scooter, but it's best to set a leisurely pace. Save the fancy tricks and daredevil maneuvers for a later date.

"Don't go extreme," Charity said. "This is not the time to go mountain biking or do a 20-mile hike or skateboard down all the railings outside the empty malls or theaters."



Gardening

"With kids home from school, a family outdoor activity such as gardening can be a safe and fun alternative," Nagrani said. Stick to weeding, trimming and pruning the plants in your own yard rather than visiting a community garden.

