

# Q & A

Solano County  
Deputy Health Officer  
Dr. Christine Wu



**Dr. Christine Wu** is the deputy health officer at Solano County Public Health and one of the many health officials leading the charge to protect the public from the ongoing pandemic.

**We talked with the public health expert to discuss the pandemic, how to keep yourself safe, and what comes next in a reopening process.**

**As cities and counties cautiously reopen, many Carquinez residents are left with questions: Is it safe to go out? Is there going to be another outbreak? Should I just stay home?**

**Solano County is currently in Stage 2 of reopening. What can people expect going forward?**  
I think what we're doing is we're entering a new normal. In Solano County, our residents have done a really great job in following the shelter-at-home orders so far, and we haven't seen the sustained community transmissions of COVID-19. Stage 2 of (California's) plan allows for our low-risk activities

as well as some of our medium-risk activities to reopen, so what people can expect to see are businesses posting signage with some key prevention practices in place. Medium-risk businesses (such as in-person dining establishments or hair salons) may require that (staff and patrons) wear face coverings to decrease the potential spread of virus. It's more important than ever for people to be responsible for

**SAFETY TIPS** DR. WU RECOMMENDS HOW YOU CAN CHOOSE SAFER ACTIVITIES WITH A SIMPLE PHRASE: **PEOPLE, TIME, SPACE, AND FACE.**

**PEOPLE** "Think about the people involved," says Wu. "You want to choose to be around fewer people, ideally in a smaller grouping. Their exposures are going to be your exposures."

their own safety and to ... take all necessary precautions.

**Many people are anxious about whether it's safe to return to public life. What steps can people take to keep themselves protected?**

As we reopen, it's more important than ever for those who are more vulnerable to the negative outcomes of COVID-19 to continue to self-isolate. These would include our older population (and) those with chronic health conditions—they should continue to stay home.

If you do choose to go out, choose outdoors over indoors. Choose to be around fewer people who are outside of your household circle. Limit the time you're out in public. We need to continue to practice social distancing, including physical distancing: wearing a face covering when that physical distancing is not feasible; washing your hands before and after touching public surfaces; practicing cough and sneeze etiquette (such as coughing or sneezing) into your elbow or a tissue; and maintaining cleanliness and disinfecting high-touch surfaces regularly.

**What activities are safe? Are there any particular activities we should avoid for now?**

The first thing I want to say is that there really is no zero-risk activity. On our website, we list a bunch of low-risk activities. It includes outdoor recreational activities like hiking, golf, tennis, boating. Just about any outdoor activity is safe.

The main activity that is too risky is large gatherings in small spaces, where you're socializing with people you don't normally live with. We're seeing that large family gatherings with people from all over are actually causing the spread of COVID-19, so I don't recommend people do that.

**There's a lot of confusion surrounding the coronavirus. What do we know, and what do we still need to find out?**

We know it is highly contagious and mainly (spreads) through our saliva and respiratory secretions. We know it's easily killed with common household disinfectants. We know that most people who are infected do not develop severe illness. But if you are a part of that older population, especially if you have chronic health conditions, oftentimes you do have worse outcomes when you contract the virus.

What we don't know is why some younger people, including young children, actually have very severe reactions that can even cause death.

**"...you can have both the flu and the coronavirus. That's why I continue to promote that people get their flu vaccine."**

Many are predicting there will be a resurgence of the virus in the fall. Is that likely? If this virus is similar to (other) respiratory viruses, it's likely to return in the fall. I think it's still a bit early to tell if reopening will cause a surge in cases or if there will be a break in the summer and then a return in the fall. But if we all continue to practice social-distancing measures ... it can really decrease the spread of any respiratory virus.

**Some officials are concerned about dealing with the flu on top of the coronavirus. Are you worried about that?**

I do have those same concerns. This past year, we had a really bad flu season, and some people have been questioning whether it could've been the coronavirus coming on earlier than we knew about. Because you can have both the flu and coronavirus.

That's why I continue to promote that people get their flu vaccine. As soon as it's available, I really encourage everyone to get vaccinated.

**What steps is the county taking to prevent further outbreaks?**

Solano County has been actively investigating all outbreaks to prevent further transmissions once we identify a case. We work with multiple partners, including hospitals and healthcare staff, to ensure capacity for a surge in cases. We've been working with governmental agencies ... to coordinate the guidance with our multiple business partners to ensure safe operations as we're reopening.

We've also been preparing a large workforce of contact tracers to investigate outbreaks, and we're doing surveillance testing of ... nursing homes, jails and their staffs, (and) healthcare organizations. And we're continuing to expand testing to meet the needs of the community.

**Who should get tested?**

We should get tested as much as feasible. (Testing) is readily available in Solano County for anyone, regardless of insurance status and symptoms.

**This is an anxious and scary time for a lot of people. What message do you have for the community?**

If we continue to practice these safety guidelines for ourselves, that's the best thing we can do. I want to reassure people that this, too, shall pass.

**It's no secret that many of us have been spending a lot more time on Netflix. What have you been watching lately?**

One of the shows I used to like to watch a lot was *The Amazing Race*. Recently they put it on Amazon Prime, all 20-odd seasons of it. I never got past season two or three, so it's been a lot of fun to travel, so to speak, through the show.

**For more information, including a list of permitted activities as well as how to get tested, visit solanocounty.com/covid19.**

**FACE**

Perhaps no accessory is more important nowadays than a mask, says Wu. "Wearing a face covering can block much of the spread of germs from person to person."

**SPACE**

"Maintaining physical distance is more important than ever," she says. Keep at least 6 feet away from others, and allow for more space "if your activity involves heavy breathing, speaking, or singing."

**TIME**

Consider how much time you want to spend away from home—and with other people. "The longer you are exposed to someone, the higher your risk," says Wu.



**Talk to a licensed therapist and privacy safety of your home.**

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