First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Sex in the Time of COVID-19

Note: the following article includes adult messages about sexuality.

Some facts about COVID-19 and sexual intimacy

COVID-19 is passed through what are called "respiratory droplets" from people who have the virus. These droplets can be passed from person to person through coughing, sneezing – and yes, kissing (saliva and mucous).

There are a number of things to consider when it comes to sexual intimacy.

- Consider intimacy in broad terms. The safest partner for you to have is yourself.
- The safest way to have "sex" with another person is via virtual / physical-distanced means, e.g., video call.
- The use of sex toys may be a good idea these days, ensuring they have been washed with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after use (not hand sanitizer).
- The fewer partners you have, the fewer chances of spreading or getting the virus.
- If you are a sex worker, your safest option is virtual sex or chat rooms.

IS SEX SAFE WITH A LIVE-IN PARTNER?

COVID-19 does not seem to be passed through vaginal secretions or semen. However, if you or your partner have respiratory symptoms there is a risk of transmission. There's also a transmission risk if either of you have the virus but no symptoms.

WHAT ABOUT A PARTNER WHO DOESN'T LIVE WITH YOU?

It is a good time to consider talking to each other about what is best for you and maintaining intimacy.

WHAT IF YOUR PARTNER IS PRESSURING YOU TO HAVE SEX BUT THEY'RE SYMPTOMATIC?

Some people don't feel safe saying no to sex – even if they or their partner are feeling sick or are symptomatic. Also, if you are earning your living through sex work you may be at risk of violence when trying to screen clients. In these cases, it is important to protect yourself and know there is support available (see www.fnha.ca – search "domestic violence").