

Concerns over spike in coronavirus cases amid nationwide protests

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Some health experts are concerned over a possible spike in coronavirus cases amid ongoing nationwide protests in response to the death of George Floyd in police custody.



Video showing packed bars, clubs in Old Town Scottsdale draws concern

"I mean, there are people who can't go to funerals, people who's family members are dying and they have to say goodbye over the phone and you're basically flaunting it," said Dr. Akhter.



PHOENIX (3TV/CBS 5) -- There is widespread concern over another potential coronavirus spike as a result of the recent protests.

You see large groups of strangers gathering, cheering, and chanting while marching near one another. Not everyone's wearing a mask, and most aren't socially distancing either.

"So, a lot of it has to do with the volume of your voice," said Dr. Frank LoVecchio with Valleywise Health. "The louder your voice is, the more you're yelling, the more you're singing, for example, the more likely the particles are to spread, and those particles spread about 21 feet as opposed to talking which can spread particles 12 feet."



Thousands around the world protest George Floyd's death in global display of solidarity

Protesters have marched in the US for six consecutive nights over the death of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer. Their anger over the killing of the unarmed black man has now spread worldwide.

That has public health officials bracing for another wave of cases.

"So I think it's bad but not as bad as what I saw in Old Town Scottsdale over Memorial Day," said Will Humble, Executive Director of the Arizona Public Health Association. "The reason is that's a confined space in a night club versus being outdoors."

Humble says he fully anticipates a spike in the number of COVID-19 cases for several reasons.

"The end of the stay at home order, restaurants, bars, and even nightclubs are up and running now, we had a three day weekend in the middle of it all and now the unrest that's coming out of the concern about racism in America," said Humble.

More contact tracers are working to help warn people who might have been exposed to coronavirus, but that might be impossible

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when it comes to tracking down strangers gathered together in public protest.

"The people at the protest we're not in a controlled environment and so the contact tracer isn't going to be able to get useful information out of that interview," said Humble.

Given the number of protesters, he says it's safe to assume 2% to 3 % have coronavirus, which is highly contagious and easily spread in those environments.

"There are two kinds of public health hazards out there with the protest," said Humble. "One is COVID-19, for the people that aren't wearing a mask and people getting jumbled into groups. The other is the behavior that incites violence and that violence is a public health issue too."

He hopes more people will consider wearing masks, not only while protesting but anytime they are out in public.

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