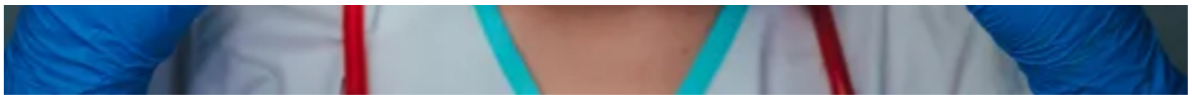


Want to slow COVID-19 spread in Arizona? Then everyone must do these 3 things

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Opinion: Staying six feet apart and wearing a mask in public are more controversial than handwashing, but research shows we need all three to slow the spread.





While the world waits for a vaccine and medications to effectively treat those infected with the virus, slowing the spread of COVID-19 is crucial.

The number of new [COVID-19 cases in Arizona continues to rise](#); our state has hit its highest seven-day average of new cases since the beginning of the pandemic. Arizona physicians and the greater health-care community need your help to change the course.

The Arizona Medical Association supported Gov. Doug Ducey's decision to enact the stay-at-home order back in April to try to "flatten the curve." We understand and recognize the social, physical and economic impacts that had on the people of Arizona. Humans for the most part are social creatures who need interaction with others, but we still have not figured out how to overcome this virus.

Prevention is the only tool we have

Right now, the public is getting to witness, firsthand, how the scientific process works when we research new treatments for a novel problem.

Usually, it is up to the scientists, physicians and regulatory agencies to sort through the data and determine what is safe and not safe for our patients.

With the rapid global takeover of COVID-19, every new study being published is getting released by the media before it can be fully reviewed by

the medical community, which has contributed to much public confusion.

Here is what we know so far.

We have neither an effective treatment plan nor a vaccine available, which leaves prevention as the most important thing we can do to protect ourselves and others.

As data and research evolves, so do the specific recommendations. That is the nature of evidence-based medicine.

Current [CDC recommendations](#) include physical distancing of at least six feet from one another, the use of surgical or cloth masks and good hand hygiene. While there seems to be no controversy surrounding the need for handwashing, there has been some confusion regarding the other two measures.

What the science is telling us

But make no mistake, more studies are being published that show handwashing, [physical distance](#) and [wearing masks](#) are all making a difference in [slowing the spread](#) of the virus.

Recently, there has been doubt about the effectiveness and safety of mask use. The data is clear: wearing a mask in public lowers the chance of spreading COVID-19 through speaking, coughing and sneezing. My mask protects you, and your mask protects me.

It is important to protect those we love, and we have a duty to be responsible and protect those in our communities whenever possible.

Finally, there is the issue of physical distancing. It works. We can still support Arizona's economy while following these recommendations. Both are possible, and both are necessary. Like anything, we can evolve, but we must be mindful.

Large gatherings, for now, cannot occur as they did pre-COVID. We must rethink how we have these events. We must physically distance. We must protect one another. If we want to get back to "normal," we must adjust now. These short-term sacrifices are to benefit all our futures.

We appeal to your values and your sense of responsibility and duty to others in our request that you follow the current guidelines.

- Please wash your hands before and after touching public surfaces or your face.
- Please avoid all large gatherings and maintain distance between yourself and others whenever.
- Finally, when out in public, please wear a cloth or disposable mask to protect others.

On behalf of our patients, our colleagues and our communities, we thank you.

Dr. Ross F. Goldberg is president of the Arizona Medical Association and a practicing general surgeon at Valleywise Health. Learn more at azmed.org/page/coronavirus.