

# Importance of following stay at home restrictions

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Shelter-in-place and stay-at-home orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic have gone into effect in different areas of the U.S. While the hope is everyone voluntarily complies with these types of orders, having a formal executive order allows some ability for governments to regulate movements of people and closure of businesses in order to slow the

spread of COVID-19.

In this Q&A, Dr. Nipunie Rajapakse, a Mayo Clinic infectious diseases expert, answers some questions about these types of orders and how long they may need to be in place in order to successfully flatten the curve, or slow down the infection rate, in an effort to avoid overwhelming the health care system.

Q. How effective are restrictions like social distancing or stay-at-home orders?

A. Restrictions like [social distancing](#) or physical distancing, or shelter-in-place orders have been found to be effective in some areas, mostly in combination with other strategies like testing and close contact tracing. Some countries like South Korea, Singapore and (regions such as) Hong Kong, have used a combination of strategies to flatten the curve in their areas and those have been very successful.

Q. How long will these orders need to stay in place?

A. We're still understanding and looking at case numbers and how things evolve over time. It's difficult to give a defined endpoint, and that will likely be different in different parts of the country, as well. For now, we know that for these types of measures to be effective, they generally have to be in place for a matter of weeks, if not months, and I think people should prepare themselves for that very likely possibility.

Q. Why is it important that COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions are followed by everyone?

A. The things we're asking people to do are not easy. They are definitely disruptive, they're definitely challenging, but they do have evidence to show that they work when implemented broadly, widely and followed by

everyone.

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