

# Digital contact tracing for COVID-19: an analysis of strengths and limitations

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An article in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*) analyzes the strengths and limitations of digital contact tracing for people infected with severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) to

help governments decide if and how they might adopt this technology.

"Although the benefits of digital contact tracing may be appealing, in considering whether to adopt these technologies, public health agencies and governments must also consider their technological limitations and the inherent trade-offs between privacy and effectiveness," writes Dr. Robert Kleinman, Stanford University School of Medicine, with his coauthor.

Integrating app-based contact tracing with traditional contact tracing techniques may help leverage benefits and mitigate the limitations of each approach.

Apps must be field tested in real-world situations to understand their ability to identify exposures. To identify significant numbers of contacts, apps need to be adopted by a large proportion of the population. Governments considering digital contact tracing, such as the [government](#) of Alberta, should incorporate privacy protection, establish thresholds for exposure identification, encourage widespread adoption of the technology and ensure communication among public health agencies across provincial, state and national borders.

The authors caution that access to widespread, accurate testing for SARS-CoV2, the virus that causes [coronavirus](#) disease 2019 (COVID-19), is key to the success of digital contact tracing.

**More information:** *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2020). [www.cmaj.ca/content/cmaj/early ... cmaj.200922.full.pdf](http://www.cmaj.ca/content/cmaj/early...cmaj.200922.full.pdf)

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