

Is it safe to go to the gym during the coronavirus pandemic?

21 July 2020, by The Associated Press



Credit: AP Illustration/Peter Hamlin

Is it safe to go to the gym during the coronavirus pandemic?

It depends on where you live and the precautions you and the gym take.

If cases of COVID-19 are poorly controlled where you live, experts say it's best to stay away. But if you live in an area where the spread is being contained, there are ways to minimize risk when going for a workout.

To ensure everyone stays at least 6 feet apart, gyms should take steps such as moving machines, blocking off areas and limiting the number of people allowed inside, says Dr. Marybeth Sexton, an assistant professor of infectious diseases at Emory University.

Avoiding the [locker room](#), bringing your own water bottle and using hand sanitizer also helps reduce risk, Sexton says.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also suggests checking in online, rather than in person, and seeking activities that are

outdoors instead of indoors when possible.

Gym staff should be cleaning exercise machines between uses and regularly wiping down other frequently touched areas with products that kill viruses.

And experts say face coverings should be worn at the gym whenever possible.

Sexton also suggests bringing a backup mask. If the one you're wearing gets really damp with sweat, she says it might not be as effective.

Even for those being careful, gyms pose a risk. Many are indoors, where ventilation is limited and social distancing can be challenging. In an ongoing pandemic, if you can manage to break a sweat without returning to the gym just yet, that's the best option, according to Sexton.

"If you can exercise by yourself outside, that's safer than being at the gym," she said.

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APA citation: Is it safe to go to the gym during the coronavirus pandemic? (2020, July 21) retrieved 29 November 2020 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-07-safe-gym-coronavirus-pandemic.html>

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