



# Nervous about the new normal? Manage its risk.

As COVID-19 takes its course, we're now entering a 'new normal'. As we return to the workplace, visit restaurants, and attend events, the unknown may cause some people anxiety about the safety of doing so.

The good news is that this pandemic falls into the category of what life routinely offers: the potential for risk. COVID-19 is not the first time you have had to manage risk; management of the virus calls for harnessing the skills used in other potentially risky situations.

- *Remember that you can never truly get rid of risk.* For example, driving a car isn't without its hazards, but most of society opts to do it. Life is a series of risks, but in order to participate in the world, we accept those risks, often without thinking too much about it.
- *Take control of the situation by addressing the risk and weighing the importance of any given activity.* In the example of driving a car, risk-reduction measures include wearing a seatbelt, driving at or under the speed limit, and not driving while intoxicated.

You can do the same with COVID-19. Ask yourself the questions that help you weigh the importance of the activity and what you're willing to do to engage in it. If you have no choice in any given activity, explore the steps you can take to control the risk.

Remembering that you manage risk already is a first step in addressing anxiety around entering the 'new normal'. You can leverage that familiar skill by applying common-sense approaches to control the risk specific to COVID-19.

1. **Maintain vigilance around safety measures.** Continue to keep at least six feet apart and wash your hands frequently. Wear a mask based on your preference and community or business guidelines.
2. **Find out what safety measures are in place at work.** If you're returning to your place of work, find out from your employer what they will be doing about vaccine requirements, personal protective equipment, social distancing, ventilation and general decontamination. If you've been working from home, perhaps you will continue to have the option to do so.
3. **Bring your own supplies.** Whether you're returning to work or to any other organization, you may have concerns about contamination. If permitted by your organization, bring in your own paper towels, hand sanitizer, pens, etc. Make sure they are accessible only to you.
4. **Minimize contact in communal areas.** Large gatherings in enclosed places have been shown to increase the risk of virus transmission. Avoid those gatherings whenever you can, such as someone's birthday celebration in the communal kitchen. You can't necessarily avoid a meeting, but you can insist on being six feet apart, for example.
5. **Learn your company policy around COVID-19.** Know your company's protocol if you or a colleague have been exposed to, or tested positive for, COVID-19. Find out who is your organization's point of contact for COVID-19-related concerns.
6. **Rethink how you have always done something.** Think of ways to do something differently to make it safer. For example, can you do an activity outdoors that you normally do indoors? We have learned that the virus transmits more easily in crowded, indoor spaces.

If you feel that you need further support, call your primary care physician, mental health provider, or employee assistance program.

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*This document is intended for general information only. It does not provide the reader with specific direction, advice, or recommendations. You may wish to contact an appropriate professional for questions concerning your particular situation.*

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