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[Chu Lancet 2020 review effect of physical distancing, face masks and eye protection.pdf](#)

[ECDC. covid-19-guidelines-non-pharmaceutical-interventions-september-2020.pdf](#)

[Jones 2020. Two metres or one, what is the evidence for physical distancing in covid-19.pdf](#)

Physical distancing

Avoiding physical contact and keeping a physical distance of 1–2 m is considered to be a key preventive measure and physical distancing has been widely promoted in Europe and worldwide.

Evidence base for the measure

Currently there is scientific uncertainty regarding the distance that the SARS-CoV-2 can travel from an infectious individual when breathing, talking, coughing or sneezing. Therefore the correlation between proximity to an infectious person and the risk of virus transmission has not been completely defined. Furthermore, the risk of transmission is influenced by various factors that make each contact situation unique. Factors influencing the risk of transmission are the setting (indoors or outdoors), whether the infectious individual is coughing, sneezing or talking at the time of contact, the duration of exposure, and environmental conditions such as temperature, humidity and the type of air flow. Transmission risk is also related to other factors such as the concentration of viral particles in respiratory droplets and the amount of droplets produced. Although the evidence suggests that SARS-CoV-2 may travel more than two metres, the risk of transmission decreases with the distance from the infectious source [58]. In a recent systematic review and meta-analysis, physical distancing of one metre or more was linked to an approximately five-fold reduction of the transmission risk, with twice the increased protective effect for every extra metre of distance added [59]. In addition to ensuring appropriate distance, physical barriers, such as transparent screens, can be used to decrease exposure to infectious droplets, especially in settings where there are multiple interactions and physical distancing is not possible (e.g. cashiers).

Considerations for implementation

Posters can be used as a reminder to keep a physical distance, especially in places which tend to get crowded. Floor markings spaced at the recommended distance, seat markings and rearrangement of furniture can also facilitate the implementation of the measure in places where people gather, such as shops, public transportation and restaurants. Keeping an appropriate physical distance may not be feasible in all settings, such as in households, on public transportation and for some occupations that involve close contact with other people.

58. Jones NR, Qureshi ZU, Temple RJ, Larwood JPJ, Greenhalgh T, Bourouiba L. Two metres or one: what is the evidence for physical distancing in covid-19? *BMJ*. 2020;370:m3223.

59. Chu DK, Akl EA, Duda S, Solo K, Yaacoub S, Schünemann HJ, et al. Physical distancing, face masks, and eye protection to prevent person-to-person transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Lancet*. 2020;395(10242):1973-87.