



# 28. Physical distancing

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## Overview

- Physical distancing is the practice of keeping people at a safe distance from each other during outbreaks of highly contagious diseases, to prevent diseases from spreading.
- This is different from isolation, because it is something that everyone in a community should practise, not just sick people. Physical distancing is an effective way to prevent contagious diseases from spreading.

## What to do and how to do it

### *Encouraging physical distancing*

**Promote the use of physical distancing as a method of preventing the spread of disease.** It includes doing things like:

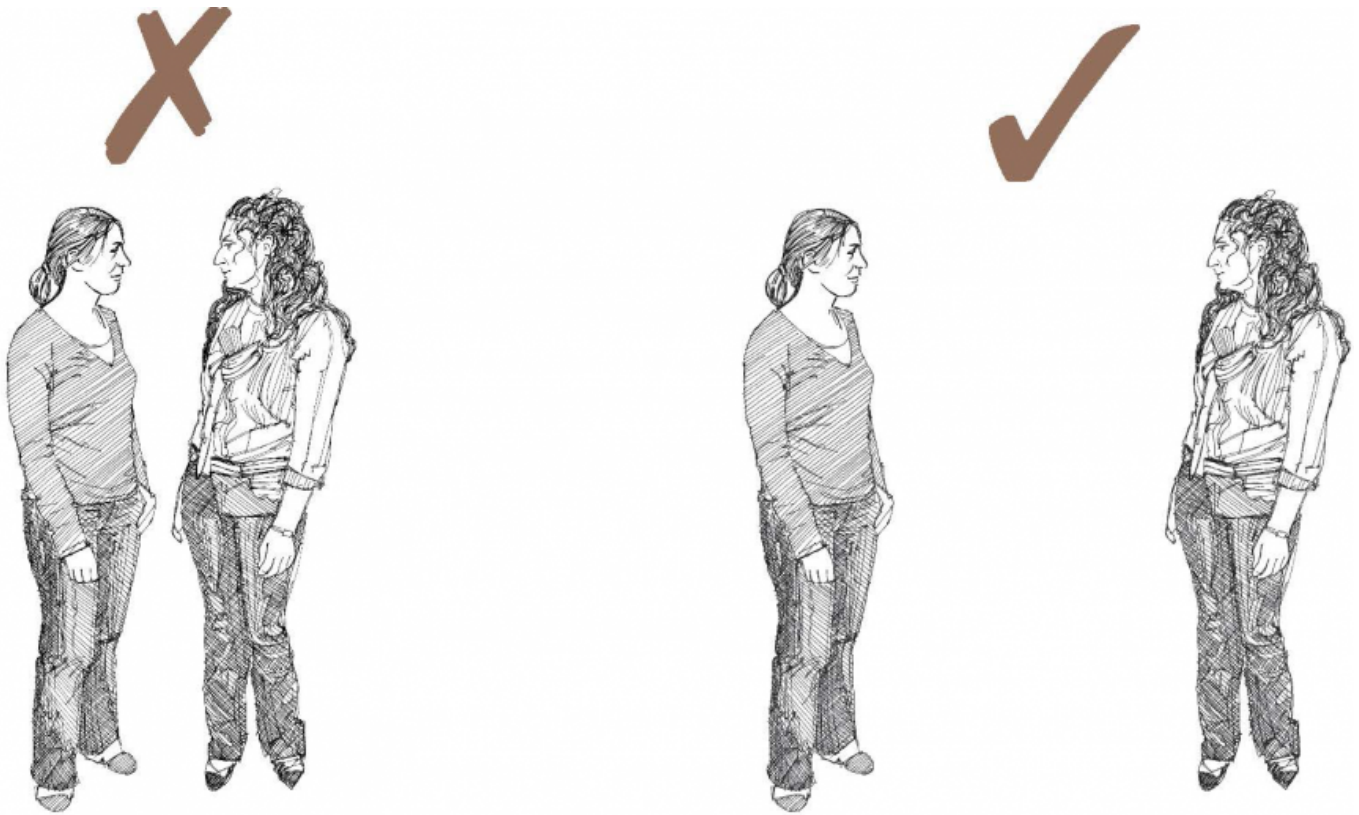
- Avoiding crowded places. For example, encourage people to:
  - Pray alone or in small groups, rather than in large groups
  - Do laundry near home rather than in communal areas
  - Go to markets or other crowded areas at a time of day when there are fewer people there
- Avoiding non-essential gatherings. For example, encourage people to:
  - Postpone weddings or similar events until safe to do so
  - Avoid festivals or community gatherings until it is safe to do so
    - Avoiding common greetings. For example, encourage people to avoid handshakes, hugging or kissing
    - Limiting contact with people at higher risk. For example, encourage people to avoid unnecessary close contact with young children or elderly people
- Keeping a safe distance from others when possible (the distance may change depending on the disease, ask for clarification from health authorities).

### **Recognize there are times when social distancing may be difficult or impossible.**

- In situations when people are sharing overcrowded living spaces, such as displacement shelters, social distancing may not be possible. In cases like this it is important to: Promote the use (and, if possible, the distribution) of essential protective equipment, such as face masks.
- Social distancing may be more difficult for people working in certain sectors and locations, for example market vendors or domestic workers.
  - Target these groups to raise awareness about the modes of transmission of the disease and the protective measures that they can take to minimize their exposure
  - Advocate for safe working conditions and access to health services

**Be aware that social distancing can lead to isolation** and may create or worsen psychosocial problems for some people.

- See Action Tool [Psychosocial support](#) to determine how to help.



## Community messages



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