

How to Protest Safely During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Wake Forest Student Health Service

The United States is still in the midst of a pandemic. COVID-19 continues to spread and there are risks any time you gather with others outside your home. The safest action to take right now is to stay home as much as possible but, if you decide to join a public protest, use the tips below to better protect yourself and the people you care about.

Prepare Before You Go Out

- **Stay home if you do not feel well.** If you go out, you risk getting others sick. If you have a serious health condition, or are older than 65, consider staying home to protect yourself. You can take action in other ways from home by [registering to vote](#), supporting local community organizations, and contacting your [legislators](#).
- **Wear face coverings correctly.** Make sure your face covering fully covers your nose, mouth and chin; this will help prevent droplets from spreading if you decide to chant. Remember that you can spread COVID-19 even if you do not have any symptoms.
- **Carry only what you need to keep you safe.** Carry alcohol-based hand sanitizer, [a face covering](#), your own water bottle, snacks, an ID, and any medication you may need (for example, an inhaler).
- **Carry soapy water and tap water in squirt bottles.** If you are exposed to pepper spray, wash the area with soap to break up the oil. After that, the area should be rinsed with water. Avoid rubbing eyes or your face since it can make the burning worse and could facilitate the spread of COVID-19.
- **Go with a small group.** It's better to march immediately surrounded by people you know. That way, if someone tests positive for COVID-19 later, you can make sure your friends get tested, too.
- **Have a plan.** Prepare yourself mentally — map out the route, establish exit routes and possible detours.

Keep Safe While You Are Out Protesting

- **Use noisemakers, drums and written signs.** Limit how much you chant or yell to reduce possible exposure to others. Shouting is like coughing: you exhale tiny droplets that can potentially spread the virus to people around you.
- **Physical distancing is still important.** Keep as much physical distance as possible between yourself and people that are not part of your group.
- **Keep practicing healthy hand hygiene.** Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and avoid touching others. Also avoid touching your face. If you must touch your face to adjust your face covering, use hand sanitizer before and after.
- **Bring your own (BYO) supplies and do not share.** Avoid sharing water bottles, microphones or megaphones.
- **Take care of your physical and mental health.** Consider when you may need to leave an unsafe situation.

What to Do Once You Get Back

- **Assume you've been exposed to COVID-19 and get tested.** Get a test for COVID-19 five days after exposure. Visit <https://shs.wfu.edu/testing-for-covid-19-wfu-student-health-service/> or call 2-1-1 for more information. Test results will not be shared with law enforcement.
- **Avoid contact with others** particularly those who may be at greater risk of severe COVID-19 illness (including those over 65 and anyone with a serious health condition).
- **Wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds as soon as you get back home.
- **Take care of your mental health.** If you need additional support, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services has [mental health resources](#) to support North Carolinians throughout the COVID-19 crisis. The Hope4NC Helpline (1-855-587-3463). Additional help related to COVID-19 can be reached by calling 2-1-1 or through Twitter at [#COVID19NC](#).

Based upon NYC Department of Public Health (see <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/covid-19-safe-protest.pdf>)