

Frequently Asked Questions County Health Officer's Order March 19, 2020

County Health Officer Dr. Nichole Quick issued an amended Health Officer's Order on March 18, 2020 as a mitigation step to help protect the health of Orange County, CA residents in an effort to slow the spread of novel coronavirus COVID-19.

What does the Order say?

On March 18, 2020 the County Health Officer issued an amended [Emergency Order](#) detailing protective measures to slow the spread of COVID-19, including limiting public and private gatherings and encouraging social distancing (maintaining a 6-foot separation from persons other than family members).

The order also strongly recommends that persons over the age of 65, those who have a chronic health condition such as heart disease, lung disease or diabetes, and people with a compromised immune system remain at home.

The Order requires the closure of restaurant dining rooms (take-out, pick-up, drive through and delivery are okay) and all bars and other business establishments that serve alcohol and do not serve food

Is this a legal order to shelter in place?

No. Residents and their families can leave their residence or place of business for daily activities, such as to:

- Buy food, groceries or supplies
- Obtain medical care
- Work at a business with social distancing
- Maintain an essential government function
- Care for a family member or pet in another household
- Go for a walk

Where does this Emergency Order apply?

This Emergency Order is in effect in all areas of Orange County. If you work in a county that is not implementing similar restrictions and are required to go for work, please practice strong hygiene and social distancing while at work and comply with the order while in Orange County.

When is the order effective and when does it end?

This Order is effective immediately on March 18, 2020 through 11:59 pm on March 31, 2020. As this is a rapidly evolving situation, this Order may be revised and/or extended at any time.

Is this mandatory or is this just guidance?

It is mandatory. This Emergency Order is a legal Order issued under the authority of California law. You are required to comply, and it is a misdemeanor crime not to follow the order. We are hoping for voluntary compliance from the community.

It is critical for everyone to follow the Order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect themselves, their loved ones, friends, neighbors and the entire community.

What is social distancing?

Put simply, social distancing means avoiding crowds when possible to help stop or slow down the spread of a highly contagious disease. For an individual, this means maintaining enough distance between yourself and another person (generally, 6 feet) to reduce the risk of breathing in droplets that are produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Tips for Social Distancing:

- Stay home if you are sick
- Maintain distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing
- Avoid handshaking, hugging or other intimate types of greetings – greet others with a wave, nod or bow instead
- Avoid non-essential travel
- Avoid crowds, especially in poorly ventilated spaces
- Know your employer's policies for telecommuting/ working from home, should that become necessary
- Avoid visiting hospitals, long-term care facilities or nursing homes unless there is a medical need to do so

I still have questions. Who should I call?

- For medical questions about COVID-19, please call the OC Health Care Agency's (HCA) Health Referral Line daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at 1(800) 564-8448.
- For non-medical questions related to this Order, please call the Emergency Operations Center Public Information Hotline at (714) 628-7085.
- Members of the media, please email EOCPIO@ocsd.org.

Orange County Schools

What about Orange County schools? Are they required to close?

The Emergency Order does not require school closure.

However, the Health Officer's Order strongly recommends limiting public and private gatherings and practicing social distancing. In the interest of the health and safety of the school community, our districts made the decision to implement distance learning instead of having students gather for learning in classrooms as a means to help contain community spread of COVID-19.

[Information about Individual Orange County Department of Education School District Closures](#)

[OCDE Campuses Offering Grab and Go Meals](#)

[OCDE School Closure FAQs](#)

Impacted Businesses and Essential Services

We want to make it clear that most businesses are allowed to continue their operations and are strongly encouraged to practice social distancing for both employees and patrons.

- Businesses should increase sanitation standards and disinfection frequency, and consider telecommuting for its workforce when possible
- All businesses should suspend any policy or procedure requiring doctor verification for sick or other leave approval
- Restaurant/dining operators should reference the California Department of Public Health's guidance, issued March 16, 2020 and titled, "[Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) and Retail Food, Beverage, and Other Related Service Venues](#)"

In accordance with written guidance from the California Department of Public Health, the following non-essential business must close until March 31, 2020.

- Restaurant dining rooms (take-out, pick-up, drive through and delivery are okay)
- All bars and other business establishments that serve alcohol and do not serve food
- Gyms
- Health clubs
- Theatres

If you operate another type of business, it is your decision to continue operation if you can practice safe social distancing.

Food and beverage establishments, food trucks, grocery stores and charitable food distribution sites, and certified farmers' markets are required to follow CDPH guidance as follows:

- All food served shall be by delivery, or through pick-up or drive through
- Dine-in food service is prohibited
- For purposes of food delivery and pick-up, social distancing, defined as maintaining a six-foot separation per person for non-family members, is required

A strong recommendation is made that all businesses enact social distancing, increased sanitation standards, and make every effort to use telecommuting for its workforce.

Can food banks that serve meals continue to operate?

Yes, but prepare and package the food to go (not a buffet) and implement good hygiene and social distancing practices.

I don't cook—how can I purchase meals?

Restaurants, cafes, food trucks, and similar establishments may remain open to supply meals to the public via delivery and carryout. You can also purchase prepared foods at grocery stores, supermarkets, certified farmers' markets, convenience stores, and other such food retailers.

How can I access free or reduced price meals for myself or my family?

Schools, soup kitchens, food banks, and other entities that provide free or reduced priced food goods or meals to students or other members of the public are encouraged to continue providing these services. However, food provided by these establishments to the public may not be eaten on the premises, but must instead be delivered or taken away for consumption.

[Orange County 211 Directory of Resources](#)

These Essential Businesses and Services can remain open:

- City/County government services: police stations, fire stations, hospitals/clinics and healthcare operations, jails, courts, garbage/sanitation, OCTA buses (use of public transportation is limited to essential required travel only), utilities (water, power and gas), and city offices
- Gas stations
- Pharmacies
- Food: Grocery stores, certified farmers' markets, food banks, convenience stores, take-out and delivery restaurants

- Hardware stores/plumbers/electricians and those who provide services necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences
- Banks
- Community benefit organizations on a case-by-case basis
- Laundromats/laundry services
- Cemeteries
- Health care providers (dentist, veterinary)
- Waste management

What if my plumbing gets stopped up or there is another problem with necessary equipment at my home? How will I access those sorts of services?

This Order does not prohibit people from working, including service providers like plumbers, electricians, and exterminators.

What do I do about my kids? I have to work.

This Order does not require childcare providers to close. Certain employers, schools, and community organizations will be providing childcare for employees of essential businesses.

Work with your employer to identify resources that may be available to you.

If I am unable to work due to the Order, will I receive unemployment benefits?

The State of California Employment Development Department will have information and resources for you, EDD.ca.gov

Is there relief for small business?

There is an effort on the Federal level, the [“Families First Coronavirus Response Act”](#), to grant relief to small businesses.

[State of California Resources for Small Business](#)

Parks and Recreation

Are County parks open? Is it okay to go on a hike?

You can go for walks, go to the park, and engage in other similar activities, but should maintain social distance (i.e. be more than six feet away from persons who are not part of your household) when on walks and in parks to avoid spread of the virus.

All County of Orange regional parks are closed to vehicular traffic, however pedestrians, bicycles and riders on horse-back are welcome. Restrooms will remain open. This may change as the situation warrants, so monitor the [OC Parks](#) website for updates.

Can I take my kids to the park and can we use playgrounds?

While we encourage use of parks, we strongly discourage the use of playgrounds because they include high-touch surfaces, and because it is typically not possible to maintain social distancing at playgrounds.

Personal and Public Transportation

Can I use ride share apps (Uber, Lyft, etc.) or taxi services?

Yes, but do your best to use it only for essential travel. Do your best to take social distancing precautions: cover your mouth and nose if you cough or sneeze, use hand sanitizer, and wash your hands before and after rides, etc.

Can I use public transportation?

Yes, but only for essential travel. When using public transport, you should maintain at least 6 feet, two to three steps away, including if you are on the bus. To help everyone be able to practice social distancing, it's important to only take public transportation for essential activities.

Social Activities

The following activities are strongly discouraged under the Order:

- Group activities in person with others who are non-family members
- Dinner parties and other in-home gatherings with non-family members
- Going to bars or nightclubs
- Shopping for non-essential goods

Should I stock up on food, medicine and necessities like toilet paper?

No. You will be able to purchase these items when you need them, as stores selling necessary items like grocery stores, pharmacies, and hardware stores should remain open. Continue to buy normal quantities of these items on the same schedule you normally do. This will ensure that there is enough for everyone.

Can I go to my church, synagogue, or mosque?

Yes, but for your safety as well as the safety of your fellow worshippers, we need to help each other fight the spread of COVID-19 by practicing social distancing. Places of worship can offer remote access to services, such as via video streaming or teleconference.

Contact your place of worship to find out what precautionary measures they may have in place.

Can I visit family members if there is no urgent need?

Yes, but for your safety as well as their safety, we need to help each other fight the spread of COVID-19 by staying at home, or practicing social distancing.

Can I still order and receive deliveries from online stores?

Yes. The mail and other delivery services to your home can continue to function, as can food delivery services. Businesses that deliver goods or services directly to residences are essential businesses that may continue to operate.

Healthcare and Healthcare Facilities

What if I'm 65 or older or have an underlying medical condition?

A strong recommendation is made that residents 65 years and older, those with a serious chronic medical condition (like heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes), or who have a compromised immune system remain at home consistent with guidance provided by the California Department of Public Health guidance issued March 16, 2020 titled, ["Self-Isolation for Older Adults and Those Who Have Elevated Risk"](#).

What if I'm exhibiting mild to moderate symptoms of COVID-19?

A strong recommendation is made for residents exhibiting mild to moderate symptoms of COVID-19 to self-isolate. If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, and you feel you need to seek medical care, call your health care provider first so that appropriate precautions can be taken. Dial 911 in an emergency.

Can I get my prescriptions or other health care needs? Can I leave home to go to the pharmacy to get my prescription filled?

Yes. Drug stores and other medical supply stores are allowed to operate. When possible you should have the drug store deliver your prescription medicine to your home.

Can I visit loved ones in the hospital, nursing home, skilled nursing facility, or other residential care facility?

Except in end of life situations, it is strongly recommended that you do not go to a hospital unless you are seeking emergency medical attention or accompanying a minor who is under 18 years old or someone who is developmentally disabled and needs assistance.

Please use alternative ways to communicate with loved ones at nursing homes and residential care facilities such as phone calls, Facetime and texting. The residents at those locations are the most vulnerable to COVID-19.

If you need to know more, please contact the facility you want to visit by phone before you leave. This is difficult, but it is necessary in order to protect hospital staff and other patients.

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