

Coronavirus Q&A: Hand washing and hygiene tips for PDA adults

The PDA Society PDA adult advisory panel (Sally Cat, Julia Daunt and Riko Ryuki) answer this question asked by a member of the PDA community: **Could you share any suggestions for hand washing and hygiene, particularly in regard to adult PDA during current circumstances please?**

“Providing unbiased facts in a concise, easy to digest manner may work for some PDAers who get on better if left to make up their own minds, rather than being dictated to.” Please see box below.

Some factual information about COVID-19

How COVID-19 is spread

The virus is mainly transmitted from people with symptoms via respiratory droplets released by coughing, sneezing or speaking. These droplets are heavy so do not travel more than about a meter (hence the suggestion to keep 2 m space between people). However, it's possible to contract COVID-19 by touching surfaces the droplets have landed on, and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth (more information on [WHO's website](#)).

How long COVID-19 remains on surfaces

COVID-19 can survive for up to 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel and less than 24 hours on cardboard.

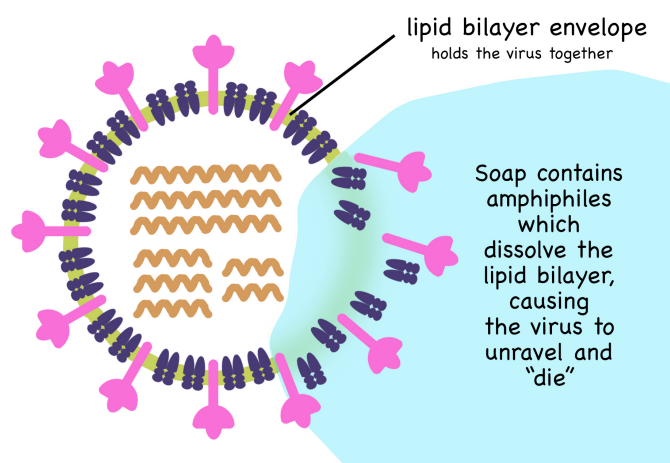
The virus can easily be removed from surfaces with common household disinfectants (more information on [WHO's website](#)).

What washing hands with soap does

One surface the virus sticks to well is human skin.

Traditional soap (as opposed to hand wash) contains amphiphiles which cause the virus structure to unravel (as shown in diagram). There is more science-based information in this [Guardian article](#).

Very simplified diagram of how soapy water unravels the virus structure



More accessible information about COVID-19 is available on PDA Society's website [here](#).

Tips for making hand washing more doable

"Finding the right soap might make a difference. I like nice strong smelling good quality liquid soaps for example. I hate Simple and Dove because I think they smell like sick. Literally."

"The glitter analogy might help if it's an issue with understanding why hand washing is important." Please see box below.

The glitter analogy

Thinking of COVID-19 as being like glitter, which gets everywhere and is hard to remove, helps some people visualise the reason for extended hand washing.

The idea started as a YouTube video designed to teach hand washing to kids which went, umm, viral, and has become popular again, with parents swearing by it. You can, if you wish, watch the video by clicking [this link](#).



"I put visual signs on the bathroom door and window for my kids to remind them to wash their hands after using the toilet. It only works as a novelty thing though.

Sometimes water and soap activities can help if hand washing is a demand, so things like playing with bubbles or making potions out of bath products.

Sometimes it's just a case of trying new soaps, like bubble gum flavour or foam.

Other times having more showers or swimming (when this is possible again) is the only way, which is better than nothing."

There may also be some sensory issues to take account of – there are some [useful handwashing tips from Sensory Integration Education](#) and many suggestions online for how to incorporate a sensory diet into your day or create a DIY sensory room.