

MIT MEDICAL PRESENTS

the Do-re-mi's of COVID-19 Risk



A solitary figure, twirling joyfully, surrounded by mountains, trees, and edelweiss. And completely safe from exposure to COVID-19. Sadly, most of us don't have access to a pristine Alpine meadow.

While vaccination has lowered the individual risk of serious illness for many of us, more transmissible viral variants make breakthrough infections more likely. **To protect vulnerable members of our community, we must continue to take precautions against exposure to the virus.**

Ready to learn the do-re-mi's of COVID-19 risk assessment? Let's start at the very beginning...

When you read, you begin with A-B-C... but we're going to start with C — four C's, to be exact: **Closed spaces. Crowded places. Close contacts. Continuous exposure.** In other words, when assessing your risk of exposure to COVID-19, consider ventilation, numbers, space, and time.

OVERALL RISK

ZERO

Frolicking alone in a meadow

The hills are alive, but they aren't crawling with COVID-19. There's virtually no chance of encountering the virus when you are outdoors and alone. Even if others are around, the risk of outdoor transmission is very low, particularly if people are maintaining some distance from each other. Fresh air and exercise are important. Get out there, and climb every mountain!



LOW

Socializing with your bubble

There's not much risk in spending time indoors with members of your own household or another small group of other vaccinated individuals. But it's safest when you know that everyone in the group is equally committed to avoiding risky behaviors outside of your time together — that means no surreptitious trips to the gazebo for a clandestine rendezvous.



MODERATE

Grocery shopping

Picking up a few of your favorite things means being indoors with people whose vaccination status is unknown and who may not be masked. But the size of most grocery stores reduces the risk — cavernous indoor spaces are safest. To be even safer, mask up and keep your distance from others as much as possible. And don't dawdle over the schnitzel; make a list, and shop efficiently. Reducing the time you spend in the store reduces your risk of exposure.



HIGH

Going to a hair salon

Are you ready to say so long, farewell, auf wiedersehen, goodbye to those split ends? Going to the salon or barbershop means spending time in a relatively small indoor space and having prolonged, close contact with another person. Decrease risk by patronizing establishments that insist on masks. Make an early-morning appointment, and spend as little time there as possible.



YIKES

Going to a bar, nightclub, or party

Feeling like a lonely goatherd? Tempted to go out for a few beers or dancing? Unfortunately, a relatively small indoor space that's densely packed with unmasked people is COVID-19's favorite habitat and the environment most likely to expose you to the virus. Add people shouting to be heard over the background noise, and you've got the final ingredient in your recipe for a super-spreader event. Seriously, don't do it. Instead, move that party outdoors or get creative with Zoom.

