



How to Protest Safely During COVID-19

orangecountync.gov/coronavirus



Wear a face covering.



Wear eye protection to prevent injury.



Stay hydrated.



Use hand sanitizer.



**Don't yell.
Use signs and noise makers instead.**



Stick to a small group.

Keep 6 feet from other groups.

Americans have the constitutional right to assemble, and we support community members as they protest the unjust death of George Floyd and many other black and brown lives lost, as well as those affected by racism and racist acts. Systemic racism is a public health crisis and is further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. The fact that this new disease disproportionately affects people of color is another concrete manifestation of the institutional and structural racism that spurred the current protests. If you choose to go out to express your outrage, pain, and to call for justice, we offer the following advice for the safest ways to protest during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- If you are sick, even if it's just a little cough or cold, please stay home! There are many online campaigns you can support as an alternate form of protest. Do your research for credible campaigns.
- If you chose to attend a protest, take these steps to lower your risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19:
 - Know that the more people that are gathered, and the longer you are there, the more risk you have of catching or spreading COVID-19.
 - People in group gatherings should monitor their health for 14 days afterwards. If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 you should get tested right away (whether you've been at a protest or not).
 - Try to stay 6-8 feet away from others. We understand this could potentially be difficult during a protest, but do the best you can.

- o Try to stay with a small group if possible, and again, stay 6-8 feet away from other groups.
- o Stay away from people who are shouting or singing because these activities spread more virus into the air. Instead consider using noise makers to replace shouting.
- o Wear a cloth face covering.
- o Sanitize your hands often.
- o Avoid touching your face.
- o Avoid touching objects and surfaces that others have touched.
- o Stay hydrated! Keep water and a snack with you.
- o Be mindful of the weather and watch for heat related illnesses and know when to seek care.
- Should I get tested for COVID-19 if I went to a protest rally?
 - o Only if symptoms develop or if you have been in contact with someone with COVID-19.
 - o If you have questions about getting tested please call (919) 245-6111.

It is also important that you know your rights while protesting:

- The first amendment gives Americans the right to assemble peacefully and air our grievances.
- Restrictions can be imposed on protests, including the place, time and manner of the protest.
- The first amendment does not, however, protect protests that escalate to violence or the destruction of property.
- You do not have the right to assemble on private property.
- Police and local government can order you to leave or disperse if ample notice is given to leave somewhere safely (ex. a curfew has been issued).
- You have the right to take photos and videos of what is happening at a protest.
- Police cannot ask you to give them your phone or forcibly confiscate it without a search warrant. Police also cannot ask you to delete video you took or delete it themselves.
- At a public protest in the US, you consent to a photo just by being there.
- If you are arrested, police do not have the right to know where you're from or your citizenship status. You can ask for a lawyer – talk to one immediately if you're booked into jail. Memorize a contact number just in case or write it on your body in permanent marker. The National Lawyers Guild is a good example. Police cannot listen in on your call to a lawyer, but they can listen to a call to a friend or family member.

We also strongly discourage police tactics of de-escalation that affect the respiratory system like tear gas, smoke, pepper spray, and other irritants as these could prompt people to cough and gasp for air, increase chance of infections, and worsen existing health conditions.

Looking for other ways to support people of color in our community? Continuously witnessing this type of traumatic events take a toll on the mental health of everyone but in particular to people of color. Check-up on friends, family and community, as well as checking in with yourself. You can also use this time to educate yourself on the history and lasting impact of structural racism.

Sources:

<https://publichealthinsider.com/2020/06/01/answering-questions-about-protests-and-covid-19/>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/06/01/867200259/protests-over-racism-versus-risk-of-covid-i-wouldn-t-weigh-these-crises-separate>

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/02/us/how-to-protest-safely-know-your-rights-wellness-trnd/index.html>