

# KEEPING A SAFE DISTANCE: Running, jogging and biking amid Covid-19



Seeking fresh air and stress-relieving endorphins, many have taken up outdoor exercise of running, jogging and biking. These are good forms of exercise and alternatives to closed gyms and cancelled group exercise classes; however, runners, joggers and bikers should use safety precautions when out and about.

According to guidelines set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, outdoor activities such as running and biking are fine to continue doing, even during a shelter-in-place mandate, as long as you stay physically distant (six feet away) from others and avoid groups. When your runs or bike rides are on remote trails, these rules are easier to follow. But in narrow pathways, it's harder for runners and cyclists to maneuver and remain a safe distance apart.

Social distancing practices that we apply to other daily activities such as shopping, walking and hiking of six feet, may be insufficient for more physical workouts. Health professionals advise that the space between walkers should be between six feet and even more distance between runners and cyclists. It's also important that when overtaking another person when running or cycling you should take as wide a space as possible.

The County of San Mateo Health Officer has issued orders requiring individuals to maintain 6 feet of social distance between them. In addition, Order of the Health Officer No. C19-8 recommends that each person engaged in outdoor recreation wear a face covering in circumstances where it is difficult to comply with social distancing requirements. Order No. C19-8 requires runners and cyclists to take additional precautions to avoid exposing others to their exhale including slowing and moving aside when nearing people or wearing a face covering when possible.

Analysis suggests that while exercising at more advanced levels of running, jogging and biking, droplets that we expel when coughing, sneezing or, in this case, when sweating tend to have a further reach. While the droplets are suspended in the air, they can easily spread the virus to other people in close proximity (and possibly farther than the otherwise recommended 6 feet of social distance) as they walk, run or cycle. Consider allowing for much more space behind a fellow exerciser, and wherever possible, stagger your position so that you are not directly behind them. Belmont's open space trails are well used by cyclists, runners, walkers and hikers, and are in places narrow with relatively limited visibility and inadequate space to maintain social distancing, making it impractical to achieve sufficient precaution at all times against the spread of COVID19 without the use of a face covering. That is why on April 22, 2020, the use of face covering was required at all times, for each person age 13 or older while on City of Belmont open space trails.

You should treat your exercise as though you were traveling anywhere during the pandemic. Consider the following CDC advice on how to protect yourself and others:

- Don't go outdoors to exercise if you feel sick. Stay home.
- Do not gather in groups.
- Stay six feet apart or more if you're passing others, and remember to be courteous to all.
- Don't spit around others; cover coughs and sneezes with elbows
- Avoid touching your face and touching things like handrails or cross-walk signals
- Carry your own water and hand sanitizer with you, and try to avoid drinking fountains.
- Wash your hands after you exercise
- If it's too crowded, try exercising at a less popular hour or on a wider route
- If you are nervous about the crowds, stay inside and do some at-home workouts

Most importantly, enjoy the outdoors, stay safe and be healthy!