

Eight Simple COVID-19 Risk Reduction Steps for Divers

COVID-19 primarily spreads by inhaling small droplets exhaled by an infected person (respiratory transmission), and by touching the eyes, nose and/or mouth after touching something an infected person touched or sneezed/coughed on (contact transmission). By staying aware of both, risk-reduction is usually straightforward. Keeping things simple usually works well.

1. Don't go diving if you have or may have (symptoms), or have been exposed to any infectious disease. Isolate until healthy and clear according to medical advice.

2. Support the space program. On the surface and out of the water, apply social distancing and give each other the local minimum required separation.
3. Keep your dirty mitts off! Sanitize/wash your hands before and after touching any dive gear (including your own), even if touching was in/underwater. Don't touch someone else's gear unless absolutely necessary. It's not clear that immersion reduces COVID-19 contact risk, so assume that it doesn't. Note: Recommended hand sanitizers are 60%+ alcohol and highly flammable. Do not use hand sanitizer near oxygen nor a fire source. Be sure hands are fully dried before using either.

4. Don't clam up: Medical mask etiquette. My mask helps protect you. Your mask helps protect me. Let's follow local protocols and not be shellfish.
5. COVID-19 hates scuba. Your mask reduces eyes and nose contact-risk, and keeping it on is the best habit whenever you're in the water anyway. Breathing from a regulator reduces your respiration transmission risk.

6. Be a lean, clean, sanitary machine. Use defog. Disinfect masks, snorkels, regulators and BCDs before another person uses them, and before storing them. Don't sling the . . . stuff . . . out of your mask after a dive. Rinse it somewhere appropriately. Avoid spitting/blowing nose etc. into the water where others will be/are. Use tissues and discard them appropriately. Wash/sanitize your hands after touching high contact surfaces like railings, door pulls, safety handles, etc.

7. Sharing air is bad. At the surface. Diving, dive gear and wind affect the direction and distance our exhalations travel. Stay aware and avoid being on, and having someone on, the "receiving end" when clearing snorkels, breathing hard after freediving, etc. Regulator-breathing helps protect you, but your exhalations might affect someone who's too close and not using a regulator.

8. But sharing air might be really important underwater. So, don't test breathe your alternate second stage. Test purge it during checks, but leave it disinfected in case someone needs it. Or, test breathe it, then redisinfect it.



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