

Understanding Social Distancing, Isolation, Quarantine, Flattening the Curve and More

In light of the [COVID-19 virus](#) running rampant through the world, we must heed the advice of experts to separate fact and necessity from fiction and inconvenience.

Isolation vs Quarantine

This definition comes from CDC (Center for Disease Control):

Isolation separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick. Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.

CDC

Simply put, isolation and quarantine are similar in their goal of limiting the spread of disease, but isolation is generally reserved for those already known to be sick (showing symptoms).

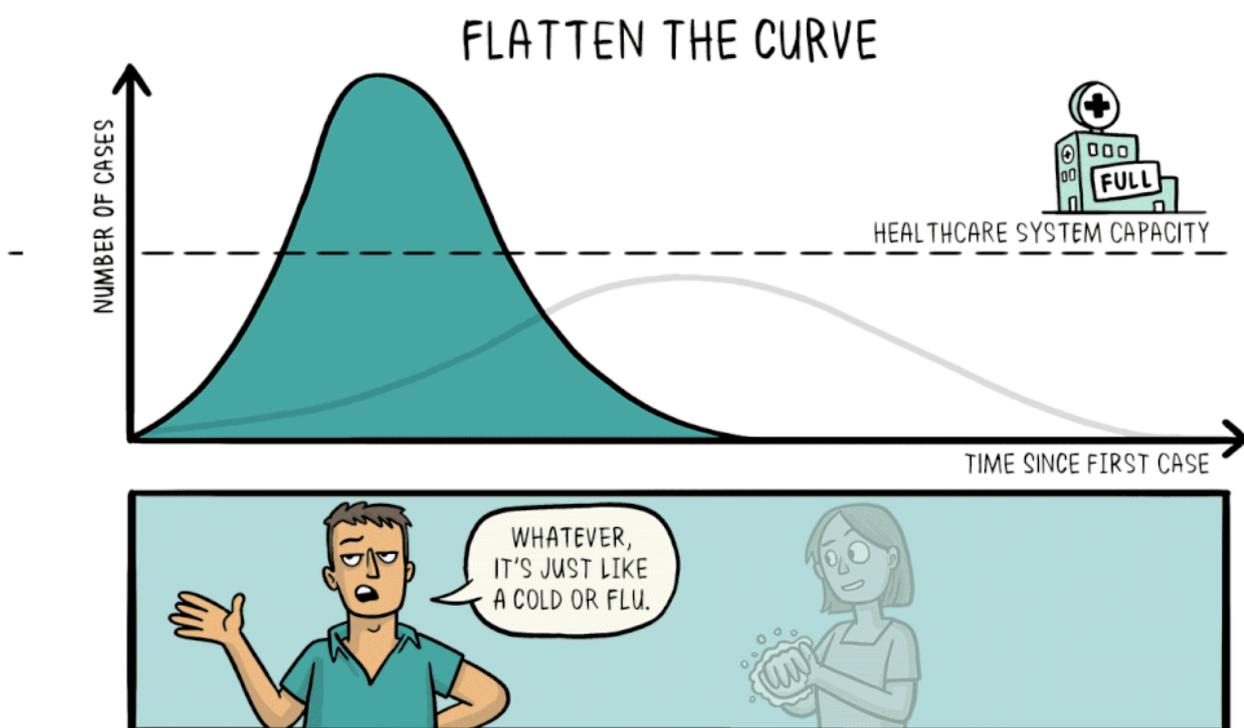
Social Distancing

Social distancing means reducing contact with others by staying away from large groups of people. The goal is to reduce the opportunity for spreading of a disease. This includes sporting events, parties, conferences, meetings, church, movie theatres, parades, festivals, and public

transit. In other words, anywhere people congregate. Social distancing means maintaining at least 3 feet between yourself and anyone else, so no hugging, kissing, hand shaking etc. If that buffer cannot be maintained, don't put yourself in that situation; it's common sense really.

Flattening the Curve

Social distancing has also been referred to as “flattening the curve” meaning slowing the exponential (growing rapidly) phase of a disease. This is a statistical method plotting the number of cases against a time frame. As this picture shows, flattening the curve helps reduce the burden on our health care system.



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Epidemic, Endemic and

Pandemic

An **epidemic** refers to a sudden outbreak of disease that attacks many people at the same time. This type of disease may spread through one or several communities. Chickenpox is a good example of an epidemic.

Endemic refers to a disease that exists permanently in a particular region or population. Malaria and Ebola are examples of endemic diseases.

A **pandemic** refers to an epidemic that has spread throughout several countries and continents around the world. Because most countries in the world now have positive cases of COV-19, it is referred to as a pandemic. SARS was also a pandemic.

Immunosuppressed, Immunocompromised or Immunodeficient

Immunosuppressed, immunocompromised and immunodeficient are used interchangeably, especially when referring to those most at risk from COVID-19. All three terms mean the immune system is weak, reducing its ability to fight infections and diseases. They refer to an immune system that is inefficient or cannot react properly. Suppressed, compromised or deficient immune systems can be the result of the deliberate use of drugs to treat cancer patients, or to prepare patients for organ or bone marrow transplants. HIV, lymphoma and autoimmune diseases also cause immune system suppression as can conditions such as diabetes, malnutrition, genetic disorders, old age and even pregnancy.

provisions on your doorstep. Public Health will advise you when you are no longer contagious.

- If you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, you are advised to **quarantine** yourself as above. If you begin to exhibit COVID-19 symptoms, call Public Health to arrange testing and begin **self-isolation**.
- If you are immunosuppressed, you should practice **social distancing** and good judgement. Stay away from anyone with a cough or cold. There is still much the experts don't know yet about COVID-19, so it is much better to be safe than sorry.
- Even if none of the above apply to you, it has been recommended that those of us living in the Ottawa area work from home if possible and not go out to public places that are non-essential (shopping, visiting friends, etc) to limit exposure to other people. Health officials suspect there are as many as one thousand cases (not yet confirmed) in the Ottawa area.
- You can, however, go outside, enjoy the [fresh air and sunshine](#) and boost your immune system at the same time! Walking, running, cross country skiing, etc.

If you are facing the crisis of COVID-19 in a country other than Canada, your country will have its own guidelines and recommendations, but I bet they are quite similar, as our common goal is to eradicate this pandemic. Please get the facts from your experts and act accordingly.

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