

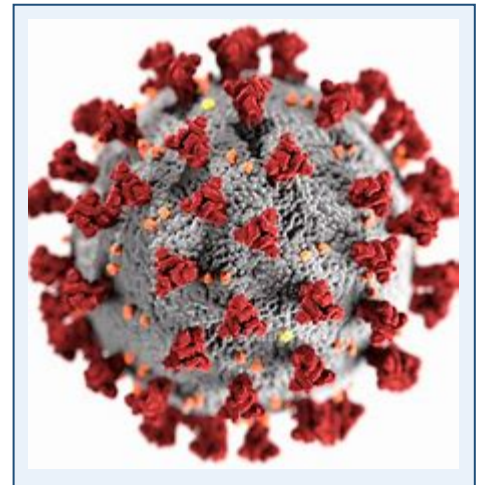


## How Touching Your Face Can Expose You to Viruses

“Frequency of hand-to-head, -mouth, -eyes, and -nose contacts for adults and children during eating and non-eating macro activities.” P. Beamer, A. Wilson, M. King, K. Reynolds, C. Gerba, M. Verhoughstraete. Southwest Environmental Health Sciences Center. Summary by Devin Ritter.

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How often do you touch your face, and how can this contact expose you to varying doses of a pathogen? Paloma Beamer, an associate professor at the University of Arizona’s College of Public Health, aimed to answer this question. Her 2001 study was conducted to determine how often different groups of people touch their faces unconsciously, as well as to find patterns of contact in different day-to-day situations. After analyzing these patterns, researchers will be better able to predict how a virus can spread from person to person. They can also determine when people tend to touch their faces the most and can use this knowledge to encourage healthy hygiene habits in these situations.



Researchers hypothesized that adults and children touch their heads/faces an equal amount and conducted a series of observations to determine if their predictions were correct. They found that instead, children tend to touch their faces much more often than adults, and that adults touch their neck/other parts of their head more often than children. Another pattern researchers noticed was that all subjects touch their faces much more frequently during eating activities than during non-eating activities.

Prolonged hand-to-face contact like this can lead to a much faster transmission of disease. By changing our hygiene habits and simply being aware of our own hand-to-face contact, we may decrease the risk of disease transmission. However, hand-to-face contacts are often subconscious, so we should also start washing hands and wiping surfaces more frequently to decrease pathogen transmission. This should be considered particularly when engaging in eating activities, as this study indicated an increased risk of exposure due to higher contact frequency while eating.

Links: [Don't Touch Your Face! - APIC](#)

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