

## **Sex, Touch and Relationships in Time of Coronavirus – for MS Patients (Israel Multiple Sclerosis Society)**

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(Translation: Yifat Sharabi)

Recently, following the coronavirus (Covid - 19), many persons are asking questions about touching, kissing, and sexual relations. The touch is a source of joy, warmth and closeness for many of us, but unfortunately it has become a forbidden activity for those who do not live in the same house, due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. We all understand that the coronavirus spreads through respiratory droplets from person to person, through coughing or sneezing and salivation, which creates in many of us fear of kissing and even having sexual relations. So, let us try to make things clear and maybe give you safer options for sexual fulfillment.

Let us start with the guidelines we have today regarding sex. As I have mentioned, those who do not live in the same house should avoid all contact and this, of course, includes sexual contact. If you live in the same house and you are both in quarantine and do not meet other people, you feel well and have no symptoms, you can touch each other and have sexual relations. However, it is important to note that if you do not feel well, avoid contact.

**In any case, and before doing anything, anyone who is still worried is certainly understandable. You are at a higher risk because your immune system is weak, therefore, I strongly recommend consulting with your treating neurologist about any contact related issues. Today it is possible to do so by making a phone call and by email.**

### **Safe Sex**

What is safe for us all is masturbation. It is the safest sex there is today. It is important to wash your hands (and all sex toys) with soap and water for at least 30 seconds before and after touching yourself. After each use, put the sex toys in a place no one can reach.

### **Creative Ways for Partners Who Do Not Live Together**

For couples who do not live together, there is the possibility of experiencing contactless sexual relations in a light and erotic way through phone calls or video-chat apps, such as Whatsapp or Zoom, with or without video. And of course, for those who love writing, there is always sexting, which is sending text messages of a sexual or erotic nature.

These ways can be your foreplay to virtual sex, and they certainly help release sexual energy, relieve mental stress, and boost desire. It is only important to do this with someone you trust and know well!

For those who do not like the modern ways, or cannot masturbate for religious reasons, and anyone who is afraid to have sex even if they are in solitary confinement, do not despair, because during this time you can definitely strengthen the relationship and invest in love and intimacy.

It is also important to understand that many of us have no sexual desire during this time, which is just fine. So here are some ideas on how to refresh and strengthen your relationship these days.

### **Invest in Your Relationship**

My first recommendation is to start strengthening communication and, regularly (once a week), set a date for a weekly conversation about your relationship. This can of course include concerns about your relationship in today's situation and providing support, as well as things that bother you both, and ways to improve them. In addition, it may include new goals for your future, such as art classes or future trips you want to do together, and more!

A final recommendation for today is to schedule a romantic date at least once a week. True, you are at home, in quarantine, but romance can exist anywhere, all it takes is fine lighting, good music, delicious food, and lots of attention and love. You can make a bath for one of you while the other is sitting by, watch a romantic movie together in the living room, and even sit on the balcony enjoying a candlelit dinner in a pleasant atmosphere. The principle is investment and attention but in romantic way - just like your first dates.

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