

Can cash carry coronavirus? World Health Organization says use digital payments when possible

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The World Health Organization is reportedly encouraging people to use as many digital payment options as possible in the wake of the coronavirus crisis.

While the primary way to spread coronavirus is via coughing and sneezing, viruses can survive on hard surfaces like coins for days in some cases. U.S dollars, a blend of fabric and paper, are harder for viruses to stick to.

Still, the world's health agency is saying don't take chances if you don't have to, the Telegraph reports.

"We know that money changes hands frequently and can pick up all sorts of bacteria and viruses and things like that," a WHO representative told The Telegraph. "We would advise people to wash their hands after handling banknotes and avoid touching their face."

The WHO didn't explicitly say that money specifically is linked to coronavirus, which is also called COVID-19. However, the agency did say it's "advisable to use contactless payments to reduce the risk of transmission," the Telegraph reports.

Representatives for the World Health Organization weren't immediately available for comment.

When it comes to [viruses](#) in general, reducing interaction with people will reduce the chances of getting sick, medical experts say. And cutting back on touching unclean surfaces or keeping your hands away from your eyes nose and mouth also reduces odds of contagion.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that it "may" be possible that a person can get coronavirus by touching an object that has the [virus](#) on it. But only if it then gets into their mouth or nose.

"But this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads," the CDC says.

Chinese banks have started essentially washing money to destroy potentially infected [cash](#) before it's handed back out to the public.

"Cash received by banks must be sterilized before being released to customers," the Chinese government's website recently announced. The nation is using [ultraviolet light](#) and heat to kill any bacteria on the surface of currency.

The U.S. government hasn't announced similar plans to clean money.

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