

# Scientists urge WHO to acknowledge virus can spread in air

6 July 2020



Members of the public are seen at a bar on Canal Street in Manchester's gay village, England, Saturday July 4, 2020. England is embarking on perhaps its biggest lockdown easing yet as pubs and restaurants have the right to reopen for the first time in more than three months. In addition to the reopening of much of the hospitality sector, couples can tie the knot once again, while many of those who have had enough of their lockdown hair can finally get a trim. (AP Photo/Jon Super)

More than 200 scientists have called for the World Health Organization and others to acknowledge that the coronavirus can spread in the air—a change that could alter some of the current measures being taken to stop the pandemic.

In a choir practice and [research](#) about a poorly ventilated restaurant in Guangzhou, China, each of which raised the possibility of infections from airborne droplets.

"We are concerned that the lack of recognition of the risk of airborne transmission of COVID-19 and the lack of clear recommendations on the control measures against the airborne virus will have significant consequences," the scientists wrote.

"People may think they are fully protected by adhering to the current recommendations but in fact, additional airborne interventions are needed."

Scientists around the world have been working furiously to understand the new virus. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [says](#) it is thought to mainly jump from person to person through close contact, but adds: "We are still learning about how the virus spreads."

Martin McKee, a professor of European Public Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine who was not linked to the letter, said the scientists' arguments sounded "entirely reasonable."

"Part of the problem is that everybody at WHO was moving with the paradigm of influenza, even though we know there are lots of differences between influenza and coronaviruses," he said.

McKee noted that with Britain's recent reopening of its pubs, restaurants and salons, the possibility of airborne coronavirus transmission might mean stricter interventions are needed indoors, including more mask-wearing and continued physical distancing.

"We're getting accumulating evidence about super-spreading events happening in indoor spaces where there are large numbers of people in confined spaces," he said. "Many of these are in exactly the circumstances that governments now want to open up."

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