

# Pucker Up, Buttercup!: Should an essential worker kiss his wife?



Dear C and Dr. B;

My wife is a very affectionate person. She loves to touch and loves to kiss. Not usually a problem, but I am an essential worker in a very high risk profession for COVID-19. I know I can't keep a 6-foot distance from her, but I try as best I can to use separate plates and silverware, and I shower as soon as I get home. It would kill me if I infected my wife or daughter, so I don't want to kiss her. She says I am a hypocrite to insist on this, because we still have sex and it's only kissing that's out of bounds. I can't seem to convey the danger in such a way that my wife doesn't feel rejected, but kissing anyone at this point totally freaks me out. I tell her not to take it personally, but she's moping around and not talking much to me. I am not rejecting her, I am protecting her! It is really wearing on me from both ends - guilt/fear. What is the right thing to do?

Puckered Out

Dr. B says: Science would say you are correct in your apprehension, in fact many nurses I know are living apart from their families so as not to expose them. Emotionally this is killing them, especially knowing they might get infected and not be able to be with their families ever again should they end up terminally ill. That is a dedication to both their job and their families that is so altruistic I have a hard time wrapping my head around it. You can listen to some of their stories on YouTube. It will make your wife cry. She may also ask you why you are not like them and why you are coming home at all? On the other hand after hearing their testimonies, she is an adult and knows the score. If she still chooses to kiss you and take that risk, I believe it is a quality vs quantity of life question and you should defer to her choice, although, statistically unlikely, it would be sad if your daughter lost both of you. As to your wife's accusation of sexual hypocrisy, it is unknown if you can pass COVID-19 via sex, but as it is thought that you can contract coronavirus by just being within 6 feet of another infected human...well, there you go. Try having sex from six feet away. So, If you are positive, you have likely already infected her.

C says: Interestingly, it is possible for one member of a family to become ill while the others remain healthy. My friend Dr. H told me his brother-in-law came down with COVID-19, but neither his wife nor his three kids got it. The fact is, there is so much we don't know about this virus that there are no clear answers for you, Puckered. Anything we say is just a guess. HOWEVER, I gotta ask - you are still having sex, but you are afraid to kiss your wife? If you honestly don't want to take any chances, it is crazy to still have sex on the table at all. People in the community are catching the virus simply by touching surfaces that an infected person touched hours before. Unless your wife wraps you in a hazmat suit then covers your dick with multiple condoms, there is no way to have sex without one of you touching somebody else's surface.

Puckered, I think you are so traumatized by what you have seen on the job, and by your anxiety over the possibility of infecting your wife, that your reaction to kissing is based far more on fear than fact. I understand why your wife is taking it personally, given the fact of your intimacy in the bedroom. I also understand that you can't just let go of your fear and enjoy a make out session - there's nothing sexy about locking lips when you are so agitated you want to run out of the room. I think that a lot of essential front line workers are going through similar conflicts. Maybe your wife wouldn't take it so personally if she could talk with some other "rejected" spouses and partners who are going through the same thing. There is a great deal of comfort and reassurance in community. Another thought - why don't you develop a gesture that expresses your affection for each other? Crossing your hands over your heart and locking eyes with a warm smile is a wonderful way to express love without touching.

*You can visit Dr. B's blog at [drbrilliantcliche.wordpress.com](http://drbrilliantcliche.wordpress.com)*