

No 'temporary disruption': Coronavirus threatens to change our lives forever

We all want things to go back to normal quickly. But what most of us have probably not yet realized—yet will soon—is that things won't go back to normal after a few weeks, or even a few months. Some things never will.

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As long as someone in the world has the [virus](#), breakouts can and will keep recurring without stringent controls to contain them. In a [report \[March 16\]](#), researchers at Imperial College London proposed a way of doing this: impose more extreme social distancing measures every time admissions to intensive care units (ICUs) start to spike, and relax them each time admissions fall.

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Under this model, the researchers conclude, social distancing and school closures would need to be in force some two-thirds of the time—roughly two months on and one month off—until a vaccine is available, which will take at least 18 months (if it [works at all](#)).

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And what if we decided to be brutal: set the threshold number of ICU admissions for triggering social distancing much higher, accepting that many more patients would die? Turns out it makes little difference.

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This isn't a temporary disruption. It's the start of a completely different way of life.

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