The Centers for Disease Control’s COVID-19 prevention guidelines include avoiding “discretionary” travel, shopping trips and social visits for at least 15 days.

But what should you do if you have to run an essential errand, such as grocery shopping or visiting the pharmacy?

“You cannot get infected if your hands are clean before you touch your face, and if you don’t breathe in air from somebody who’s sick and coughing,” Greg Poland, professor of medicine and infectious diseases at the Mayo Clinic, told CNBC Make It. “So as long as those two conditions exist you cannot catch this virus.”

Here’s are some things you can do if you must go out for essentials:

**Plan Strategically** - Plan to run your errands during off-peak hours so you’ll be around fewer people. (Experts say that peak grocery store hours are typically in the afternoon on weekends and between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays. Check with your favorite local store(s) before you go. Some are setting aside special shopping hours for seniors over 60 who are at the highest risk. Make a list before you go so you get the essentials and get out quickly. Several Big Sur businesses are providing take-out food and fresh fruit and vegetables to save us from needless trips to town. Check out River Inn, Ripplewood, Fernwood, The Lodge and Big Sur Bakery.

**Bring Your Own Cleaning Supplies** – “If you have access to disinfectants such, as Clorox Disinfecting Wipes or Lysol brand disinfectants, bring them with you to the store to wipe down any surfaces that you will have to touch, such as a grocery cart or gas pump,” advises Georgis Benjamin, a physician and the executive director of the American Public Health Association

If you have it, carry hand sanitizer in your car to use after shopping until you can get home and wash thoroughly with soap and water.

Gloves and masks still aren’t necessary, unless you’re sick: “We’re trying to keep those for healthcare providers,” says Benjamin.

CDC guidelines recommend that you always wash your hands before touching your face, especially.

- after you get home from your outing
- before and after unpacking groceries
- after you sneeze or cough

Those at high risk, over 60 and anyone with underlying medical problems should try to find someone to run errands for you so you can stay at home.

Finally, for those of you who live on gated roads, remember, the keypad is metal and the virus can live there for 3 days. Carry hand wipes or sanitizer easily accessible in your car. Punch the key codes with your knuckle, leaving your hands free to close the window, handle the steering wheel and pick up the gel to wipe off your knuckle. Sound excessive? Think of how many people use that keypad daily! It’s the little things that can get you!

Please stay safe everyone!

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