



The app can track if you've been in proximity to someone who later tested positive | Photo source [John Tuesday on Unsplash](#)

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CORONAVIRUS APP WARNS OF PROXIMITY TO THOSE AT RISK

 HEALTH & WELLBEING

The app can alert users when they have crossed paths with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19

Spotted: As the COVID-19 virus spreads rapidly across the globe, people are anxious to know whether they might have been exposed. Symptoms can take days to appear and a large number of people are asymptomatic, so this is actually vital information for those still working. Now, researchers at MIT University have released the Beta version of an app that alerts users when they have come into contact with someone who has been diagnosed with the COVID-19 coronavirus.

The app is called Private Kit: Safe Paths and was developed in conjunction with the Mayo Clinic, Harvard University and others. Users download the app and share their location, and the app then tracks each user as they move around, notifying them when they have come in close proximity to someone who is diagnosed with the coronavirus. The app will also notify users how long the contact lasted.

To make the app easy to use, the design has been kept simple, with just two pages and a minimal amount of text. Privacy is a major concern, and positive diagnoses can only be uploaded to the app by a health professional, using a separate app. Location data is logged every five minutes and the data cannot be accessed from outside the users' device, without express permission from the user.

As the app will not work unless a large number of people are using it, the designers are also encouraging the US government to promote it. David Carroll, Associate Professor of Media Design at Parsons the New School **stated:** "Without leadership urging people to use an app like this, it's a lost cause, and unfortunately, the more draconian method of involuntary surveillance is more likely to be deployed."

At Springwise, we are working hard to keep up to date with the latest news regarding the fight against COVID-19. We have recently covered a [smartwatch](#) that measures infection rates, and 3D-printed [ventilator valves](#) that are saving lives.

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Takeaway:

While tracking everyone who tests positive is absolutely vital to combatting the virus, apps like this will not work unless they are widely used. There is also the danger that an absence of alerts in a particular location will lead to a false sense of security. The app can only tell you where the virus has been, not where it is going. However, it may be useful in pinpointing areas in need of closure and/or deep-cleaning. Once the pandemic has ebbed, the encryption system could have other uses, as it can only share data between phones in the network and doesn't have a central authority.