

DEAR ABBY

Write to Dear Abby online at dearabby.com or by mail at P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069



Dear Abby: Two months ago, I met a lady I will call Amber. We were instantly attracted to each other. The first date went well, and we reached first base (kissing). On the second date, we reached second base (fondling). On the third date, which was also going well, after I finished paying the check for dinner, I asked her if she wanted to continue where we had left off. Amber said no. I was fine with it.

Later that night, when we spoke over the phone, I pointed out, nicely, that she did not even say thank you for dinner, and Amber got offended. I decided to end things after that phone call. I felt she was being disrespectful of my feelings by not listening to what I was saying.

Fast-forward: Her birthday is in two weeks, and I don't know if I should bury the hatchet by dropping her a Happy Birthday text that day because I really did overall like her.

— Brand-New in New Jersey

Dear Brand-New: Amber may have become offended when, after she declined to proceed with further intimacy, you told her she "hadn't even" thanked you for the dinner. When I read that line, for a moment I wondered if you equated the two and had expected that after buying her dinner you were guaranteed sexual favors in return. The two of you have a significant communication deficit. Contact her again only if you are willing to acknowledge that fact and hope she is willing to work on it with you.

Dear Abby: My husband and I recently found out we're

expecting our first child. We have been married for five years, and while we are still fairly young, this has been a long time in coming. For both of our families, this will be the first grandchild.

My brother is getting married next month. We live in a different state but plan to fly home for the wedding. My husband says we cannot tell our families about the pregnancy on this trip because we don't want to "overshadow the happy weekend with additional good news." This means we would need to tell them over video chat (not in person), since going home for a separate trip is not an option due to COVID.

While I see his point and certainly don't want to overshadow the wedding, I don't see why we can't tell them a few days before the wedding so that it's in person and I won't have to answer a bunch of questions from close family about why I'm not drinking at the wedding. My brother's fiancée and I do not get along, and I'm not in the wedding party (if that makes a difference). Please advise.

— Anonymous Mom-To-Be

Dear Mom-To-Be: I am voting with your husband. Do not upstage your brother and his bride-to-be, tempting as it may be. To do otherwise will take the spotlight off the happy couple and aim it directly at your belly. While this might seem like a welcome opportunity to stick your finger in the eye of a woman you dislike, keep in mind that in a short time she will be family and impossible to avoid. The less friction the better.

Tracing

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Nor can they pinpoint potential hotspot locations.

"The fact that we do not collect name or location data makes it a little more difficult to evaluate effectiveness," he said.

Yet Stover and other health department officials say the limited data is the tradeoff required to assuage privacy concerns while still using the technology to slow the virus' spread.

"I think the privacy concern of individuals is real," he said. "It is a real issue and something we have to make sure we are getting right. I think we did do this right."

Over the past year, 24 states and Washington, D.C., have spent millions developing and promoting the Apple and Google-based apps or systems. The tech giants made the basic platform free, but states have spent anywhere from \$9,600 in North Dakota to \$3 million in Washington state on app development and marketing.

More than 28 million people in the United States have downloaded the mobile apps or activated exposure notifications on their smartphones. The systems use Bluetooth technology and are both voluntary and anonymous.

Critics say the technology has overemphasized privacy at the cost of usefulness.

"I have yet to see any convincing evidence that they're worth it," said Ryan Calo, a University of Washington law professor who has written critically about the apps for months and testified in front of a congressional committee last April, in an interview with Stateline.

"A lot of money, a lot of attention, a lot of oxygen has gone into developing this app. That time and money should have been put other places," he said, such as testing and manual contact tracing.

The states that haven't gone the route of digital contact tracing cite a range of reasons, from privacy concerns to a preference for manual contact tracing.

Still, even as the COVID-19 vaccine supply ramps up, the number of cases drops and states begin loosening restrictions, a few states have recently launched or are still planning to launch contact tracing apps.

Oregon and New Mexico plan to release apps soon.

Turning to technology

State officials and experts argue such systems add to their toolkits. They say the apps help to reach younger people and provide an alternative for those skeptical of traditional contact tracing, which relies heavily on public health employees reaching people by phone. And they say the technology has a role to play as Americans begin to travel again — and face the uncertain effects of virus variants.

"There is a possibility that we could have another spike in cases coming up later this summer or in the fall," said Sam Gibbs, deputy secretary for technology and operations of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

He hoped the state's app would draw 500,000 people; it's been downloaded 785,000 times.

"This is a time where we don't want to let our guard down," Gibbs said. "We need to continue to be conscious of the disease even if we have been vaccinated."

In spring 2020, as states began shoring up responses to the pandemic, state officials realized cellphone data could be used to track the spread of COVID-19. Privacy advocates balked. Polling showed Americans were divided on whether it was acceptable for the government to use phones to track people who tested positive for the virus, according to the Pew Research Center.

In response to the public concern, Apple and Google forged an unlikely partnership to develop a form of digital contact tracing with a tamer name — an exposure notifications system. The Bluetooth-based setup is opt-in only and anonymous.

When a person opts in to exposure notifications, their phone emits a signal that



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin file

Students prepare their testing kits on the OSU-Cascades campus before heading out to test for COVID-19 symptoms to determine the prevalence of the coronavirus in the Bend community in May, almost a year ago. Oregon has yet to release an app for mobile devices to help with contact tracing, as other states have done, but has said it plans to do so.

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— Ryan Calo, a University of Washington law professor who has written critically about contact tracing apps

is exchanged with nearby phones that also have opted in to the system. If a person tests positive for the coronavirus and enters a code from a public health authority into the system, notifications are sent to people whose phones picked up the infected person's signal in the previous 14 days.

Codes change regularly, and the warnings are anonymous. You're told you were possibly exposed, but not where and by whom.

Google's Android phones use an app that each user must download. Apple offers apps but also has integrated the exposure notifications system into its operating system, iOS. States can use that to send notifications to users, encouraging them to opt in, without requiring them to download an app.

Only public health authorities can activate the system.

"This was architected in a way to secure privacy," said Calo, the Washington professor. "They sacrificed the ability to effectively measure if it worked."

Measuring success

According to state health departments, the metrics available to states to gauge success are the number of people who download or activate the system, the number of times state-generated codes are used to notify possible exposures and the number of exposure notifications that are sent.

Some state health officials acknowledge the shortcomings of the apps. Gibbs, of North Carolina's health department, said the state government is typically data-driven. "This particular program doesn't give us the level of detail we use in other programs," he said.

But knowing 785,000 residents have downloaded the app, officials can assume those people are more likely to be cautious, he said. "There are a lot of soft outcomes to this that we can't really measure."

Most state health departments contacted by Stateline said digital contact tracing complements manual contact tracing.

Wyoming, for example, had about 7,000 people use the app at its peak, but only about 75 of them have used a code to broadcast potential exposures, according to Kim Deti, a health department spokes-

person. Instead, she said, the state relies primarily on in-person tracing.

"We have continued to consider phone interviews by trained epidemiologists with cases to identify those at high risk of exposure, followed by direct notification of an exposure by an epidemiologist, to be the gold standard of response," Deti wrote in an email.

1 in 5 don't have smartphones

There are other barriers. One in five U.S. adults don't own a smartphone. Of Ohio's decision not to make an app, "Equity concerns were a factor, as a person must own a smartphone to use these apps or services, possibly leaving vulnerable Ohioans without access," said health department spokesperson Alicia Shoultz in an email.

Health departments in Mississippi and Texas cited privacy and accuracy concerns in deciding not to use digital contact tracing.

The one-two punch of politicized pandemic restrictions and early privacy concerns likely turned state officials away from digital tracing, said Brian Ray, a professor at Cleveland-Marshall College of Law and director of the school's Center for Cybersecurity and Privacy Protection.

"I'm pretty confident even the perfect app would have failed," he said. "There was this sort of vicious convergence of both broad, widespread concern on the left and the right over surveillance generally, which was legit."

"Despite the fact that Google and Apple created an entirely privacy protective model, but one that doesn't work that well, they still got hammered on the privacy concerns," he said. "Politically it was too dangerous."

Still, even a year into the pandemic, with vaccine supply ramping up, some experts say it's not too late to launch these apps — and that they may be even more important now.

Arizona's app, which was developed through a pilot project at the University of Arizona, is available to the public but has not yet been marketed.

Joanna Masel, a professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Arizona, said the value of exposure notifications only increases as coronavirus case numbers fall.

"If there are 10 cases, and you quarantine one, you reduce the risk by a tenth. Each little bit of information you get is worth more," she said.

As more people prepare to travel, the exposure notifications will continue to work across state lines. The Association of Public Health Laboratories, which represents state and local health labs, hosts a national server to support all states with apps.

"As people get vaccinated, as we hope to return to more quote-unquote normal life, I think the technology can play a bigger and bigger role," said Katherine Feldman, director of the contact tracing unit at the Maryland Department of Health. She continues to urge people to opt in to the state's exposure notifications system.

YOUR HOROSCOPE By Madalyn Aslan

Stars show the kind of day you'll have

★★★★★ DYNAMIC | ★★★★★ POSITIVE | ★★★ AVERAGE | ★★ SO-SO | ★ DIFFICULT

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FOR MONDAY, MARCH 22, 2021: Fortright, energetic and impatient, there is no limit to what you can accomplish. This year, you will be active on multiple fronts, so remember to pace yourself and reserve quality time with family. Finances may ebb and flow, so avoid splurging on unnecessary items. If single, look your best, and you will attract the person of your dreams. If attached, take a well-deserved break and pencil in a vacation. CANCER provides warmth.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★★ Contact a family member who may be too proud to ask for help. Approach the situation gently. An offer to work more from home may become available. Adjust your schedule and go after it. Tonight: Step up your exercise routine.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★ Show neighbors the welcome mat. Exchange ideas around the kitchen table and get to know each other better. New friendships can emerge. Siblings may be more available than usual, so take advantage of their generosity. Tonight: Binge a new series.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★★ Treat yourself to a new device but don't go overboard. You may be fooled into thinking you have more spare cash on hand. Explore economical ways to buy what you need. Leave credit cards at home. Tonight: Time for romance.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★★ Stay away from people who stir up mixed emotions and unpleasant memories. Be proud of your accomplishments. This is not the time for modesty. Someone may treat you to a meal out for being such a good friend. Tonight: Speak from your heart.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★★ Your energy may be down even though you put on a good show. You might want to slow down and smell the roses, at least for today. Watch a film with someone who shares your sense of humor. Tonight: Hot bath.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★★ A friend may invite you to a get-together. Bring along your business card and be sure to mingle. This may be the perfect opportunity to network with potential contacts. Be confident but not too brash. Tonight: Catch up on reading.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★ Someone may ask you for pointers on how to problem-solve. Be firm and truthful, yet sensitive and caring. You will have a positive impact. Interest in helping someone may lead to a fulfilling new direction. Tonight: Prepare a presentation.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★★ Opportunities to travel for work and pleasure may arise. Don't pass up a lucrative offer until you know the entire picture. Sign up for a class or lecture with a friend. A study buddy makes learning fun. Tonight: Home shopping.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★ Impress someone influential with your astute research skills. Arrive at a solution that will satisfy everyone. You may get a financial offer that sounds tempting. Weigh it carefully since things may not be what they seem. Tonight: Cuddle up close.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★★ Have a heart-to-heart with someone special. Talk about a sticky issue you have avoided. Getting it off your chest will be easier than you think. A friend may text or email a catchy joke or appreciative words. Tonight: Unconditional love.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★ An authority figure may be critical of your work. Take it in stride, and never let it get you down. Move ahead at a steady pace with a current project. You will turn the criticism around. Tonight: Dinner guests.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★★ Excitement awaits you on the romantic front. Participate in a game with friends who know how to lose gracefully. Satisfy your urge to have fun. Challenge yourself with a physical activity you never tried. Tonight: Get in tip top shape.

Looking for local events or want to add your own? Go to bendbulletin.com/events
Questions? Call 541-383-0304 or email go@bendbulletin.com.

28 million

The number of people in the U.S. who have downloaded contact tracing features onto their mobile devices

We have had great results with Whiteboard Media's digital marketing program. I have a quarterly meeting with Makenna Frickey, where she covers everything in detail and helps me make any adjustments. She is very thorough and helpful. Can't wait to see our results for this quarter!

Amy Remick
Office Manager
Gilmore Dental
www.gilmoredental.com

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