

Press Release

Seattle Friends Develop Face-Touch Prevention Wearable In One Week to Combat Coronavirus

The new Immutouch device vibrates when users try to touch their mouth, nose, or eyes.

Seattle, WA - March 9, 2020 - Following the official announcement of the first American coronavirus deaths just miles from their home, three Seattle friends developed and launched the Immutouch Band, a wearable device designed to reduce face touching and the risk of infection. Touching mucous membranes with dirty hands is a primary route pathogens use to enter the body. While numerous official sources including the [WHO](#), [CDC](#), [Harvard Medical School](#), and the [New York Times](#) recommend avoiding face contact, few practical methods exist to achieve that goal. The Immutouch Band seeks to fill that gap. Worn on one or both wrists, the Immutouch Band vibrates when the user's hand enters a precalibrated position, such as near the mouth, nose, or eyes. Instantaneous alerts can provide an immediate intervention for habitual touchers while vigilant users can refine good habits over time. The device can be purchased for \$49.99 at immutouch.com starting today.

With global health systems stretched thin battling the spread of coronavirus, founders Justin Ith, Matthew Toles, and Joseph Toles leveraged existing hardware designs from a previous project to go from idea to product launch in an unprecedented 7 days. "A problem the size of COVID-19 requires everyone to do their part, large or small," says Matthew Toles. "The three of us happened to be uniquely well equipped to tackle this one task and felt it was our duty to at least try." For Ith, the outbreak of COVID-19 is personal. "My father has an autoimmune disease that requires him to take immunosuppressant medication. Being in his late 60's with a compromised immune system, I'm trying my best to keep the communities around him and my family clean and safe."

This isn't the first wearable Ith and the Toles Brothers have created. For the last three years they have been iterating on the Slightly Robot Bracelet, a similar device for reducing compulsive skin picking, nail biting, and hair pulling, also known as trichotillomania, a condition which affects around 2% of the population. Both the Slightly Robot Bracelet and the Immutouch band use gravimetric hand position, meaning assets like the existing inventory of printed circuit boards and portions of the codebase could be repurposed for the new device. This technological cannibalism enabled the breakneck pace of development necessary to help combat COVID-19 while there is still time. It typically takes over a year to bring a product to market. Immutouch took 1/50th of that time.

The Immutouch team takes seriously the concern for panic buying, pseudoscientific medical claims, and profiteering. A breakdown of material and operating costs can be found on their website, immutouch.com/mission. Devices are being sold as close to at-cost as possible in order to maximize availability to the public.

The unprecedented scale of the response to the coronavirus threat has spurred investment in new technologies. Laboratories around the world are racing to develop a vaccine for the virus, but the WHO estimates it will take around 18 months before they are ready. Until then, the US government is investing in [medical countermeasures](#) that show potential for saving lives. Lower tech methods like population mapping, and [buying motels](#) in which to isolate patients have so far helped reduce the damage brought by the virus. Guidelines recommend wearing protective masks around at-risk populations but shortages have been reported around the world.