

# Home Care Isolation Instructions for Patients and Their Caregivers when COVID-19 is Suspected or Confirmed

These instructions on home isolation and care are for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and those helping them at home. It is for persons who:

- have received a positive COVID-19 test result, regardless of whether or not they have symptoms
- are sick and may have COVID-19 and are awaiting test results
- are going home after being in the hospital with COVID-19 infection

## Instructions for the patient

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*You should initially isolate yourself at home. This means not going out and staying away from others, even members of your own household, as much as possible. This is to help keep the virus from spreading.*

**STAY HOME** unless your symptoms are getting worse and you need medical care.

- Do not go to work, school, stores, or other public areas.
- Use food delivery or ask friends and family to get food and other needed items for you.
- Do not leave your home except to get essential medical care.
  - If you have an important in-person medical appointment, call the office ahead of time and tell them you have or may have COVID-19.
  - Put on a facemask before you enter any healthcare facility (including doctor's office, x-ray facility, blood draw location, etc.).
- If you must leave your home for an essential appointment or for any other reason, do not use public transportation, ride-sharing (Uber, Lyft), or taxis if at all possible. If you must be in a vehicle with others, everyone should wear a mask.
- If you are having trouble getting the things you need or getting to an essential appointment, please call the social work department at the hospital where you receive your care to talk about ideas that might help.

**GET HELP** right away if your symptoms get worse.

- **Call 911 for emergencies.** You and your caregiver should watch for the following symptoms. If any of them occur, call 911 and tell the operator that you have or may have COVID-19. **Call 911 if you have:**
  - Trouble breathing
  - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
  - New confusion or trouble waking up
  - Bluish lips
- **Call your primary care doctor or nurse practitioner** right away if you have any new symptoms, but especially for the symptoms below. Remember, your primary care provider, or someone covering for them, is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call for:
  - New or worsening cough or other respiratory symptoms
  - New fever (100.4F/38C) or a return of a fever after it has disappeared for a few days

## Separate yourself from others in your home

- If you are in close contact with others (closer than 6 feet), virus particles from your breath or from a cough or sneeze can spread to someone else. This is why you must stay away from others for now.
- If you can, stay in a separate room by yourself. If possible, this room should be well ventilated, with an open window, weather permitting.
- Use a separate bathroom and bedroom if possible.
- Eat meals in a separate room.
- Do not have any visitors.
- If you need to be in the same room as another person, stay at least 6 feet apart. You and others in the room should wear a well-fitting facemask as instructed below. No touching, hugging, or kissing others.
- If possible, avoid people with chronic illnesses (such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease), people over 60 years old, pregnant women, or people with illnesses or treatments that suppress the immune system. This is important because if these people get COVID-19, they have an increased chance of becoming very sick. (However it's important to remember that even young, healthy people can get very sick from COVID-19.)
- Because it is unknown if pets can spread the virus, avoid contact with pets and other animals. If you need to have contact with pets, wash your hands before and after and wear a facemask.

## Use a facemask if you need to be close to others

- If you need to be in a room with others, everyone should wear a well-fitting facemask that covers the mouth and nose. You can find important information about facemasks and how to wear them from the [CDC's Guide to Masks](#).
- If the facemask gets wet, dirty, or torn, replace it with a clean, dry one. When removing it from your face, don't touch the front part that was over your nose and mouth. Don't touch your nose, mouth, or eyes.

## Clean your hands often

- If virus particles are on your hands, you can spread them to surfaces that you touch. If someone else touches that surface, they can get sick. Washing or sanitizing your hands helps remove the virus particles.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Be especially sure to wash with soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty. Dry your hands with a towel that only you are using. Wash the towel with the rest of your laundry.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they are dry.

## Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze

- If you have COVID-19 (or any respiratory virus), particles of the virus are forcefully pushed out into the air when you cough or sneeze.
- Be sure you cough or sneeze into a tissue or into the inside of your elbow. Don't use your hands. If you forget and you cover your cough or sneeze with your hands, wash your hands right away.
- Throw used tissues in a trash can and then wash your hands.

## Avoid sharing personal household items

- Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or pets in your home. After using these items, wash them thoroughly with soap and water or in the dishwasher.

## Cleaning and disinfecting

- High-touch areas (doorknobs, light switches, counters, tables) should be wiped down with a disinfectant each day. If you live with others, someone else should do the cleaning.
- Refer to product instructions, use gloves when cleaning, and wash hands afterwards.

- You may also use diluted household bleach as a disinfectant. Use 5 tablespoons of concentrated bleach per gallon of water. Never mix bleach with ammonia or other household cleaners.
- For more, check [CDC resources on disinfection](#).

## Instructions for washing clothes

- Use regular detergent for washing.
- Dirty laundry from an ill person can be washed with other people's items.
- Clean and disinfect clothes hampers according to guidance above. If possible, consider placing a bag liner into the hamper that can be thrown away or washed.
- If someone is helping you with laundry, they should wash their hands well after handling your laundry.

## Disposing of gloves, masks, and other contaminated items

- Gloves used for cleaning should be disposable if possible and should be thrown away after each use. If reusable gloves are used, they should be used only for cleaning and disinfecting for COVID-19 and should not be used for other reasons.
- Clean your hands after removing your gloves.
- Clean your hands after handling gloves, masks, and other contaminated items.

## When to stop home isolation

When you are able to stop home isolation depends on several factors including when you first felt sick or had a positive COVID-19 test, whether you have had any symptoms, and whether you have an illness or are undergoing a treatment that suppresses your immune system.

- If you have tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms, you may end home isolation 5 days after your positive test, but you must continue to wear a facemask around others for an additional 5 days.
- If you had symptoms from COVID-19 infection, you may end home isolation 5 days after your symptoms started as long as your fever has resolved and your other symptoms are improving, but you must continue to wear a facemask around others for an additional 5 days.
- If your fever has not resolved or your other symptoms have not improved after 5 days, contact your health care provider for further guidance.
- If you had severe illness and needed to be admitted to the hospital and received oxygen treatment, or if you have a weakened immune system, you may need to isolate for a longer period of time. Your health care provider will advise you on which duration of isolation is necessary for you.
- If you need to go to a healthcare facility (outpatient, inpatient, or procedure area) for any reason within 10 days from your positive test or the onset of your symptoms, tell your providers about your COVID status. If your matter is not urgent, you may be asked to wait until 11 days after your diagnosis. If you need to be seen sooner, those caring for you will take special precautions to help ensure that COVID doesn't spread from you to others.

## Additional instructions for caregivers and household contacts

- Ideally, one person who is in good health should be the primary helper/caregiver.
- Read the information in this brochure thoroughly.
- If you are in the same room with the sick or COVID-positive person, you need to wear a well fitting facemask, even if the sick person is also wearing one. Wash your hands frequently as directed above.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- You (caregiver/helper) should clean frequently touched surfaces, as described above. If needed, you may help wash/clean the sick/COVID-positive person's clothes, dishes, and personal space/bathroom if they cannot. Do so only as needed to avoid unnecessary contact with them or with things they have touched. Wear gloves. Use disposable gloves if they are available. If reusable gloves are used, those gloves should be dedicated for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and items for COVID-19 and should not be used for other purposes. Always wash your hands after removing gloves.
- Monitor the sick/COVID-positive person for worsening symptoms as directed above.
- Monitor yourself for symptoms for at least 10 days after the person you are helping is off isolation. See information on [COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation from the CDC](#) for additional details, or speak to your primary care physician. Monitor yourself for:
  - fever (temperature of 100.4F/38C or more)
  - cough
  - shortness of breath
  - sore throat
  - body aches/chills
  - diarrhea
  - loss of taste or smell
- Call your healthcare provider if you develop these symptoms and inform them you are a close contact of someone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19.

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## Tips to help your recovery

Recovery and home isolation can be difficult, physically and emotionally, especially if you've had COVID-19 illness. Here are some tips that may help:

- Be sure to rest and drink plenty of fluid.
- Stick to a routine; get dressed every day.
- If you feel up for it, try to stay active. It is not necessary or helpful to stay in bed. Walk laps in your room, or try some online yoga or exercise videos. Take care not to overexert yourself.
- Make a point to connect with those close to you by phone, email, video call, or texting.
- Develop a "self-care toolkit." What helps you relax? It may be journaling, reading, yoga, music. Use your toolkit frequently.
- Remind yourself that this is temporary.

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This material is adapted from information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For more information, please visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html>