

# Guidance for Persons Who are at Higher Risk for Serious Illness related to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

This guidance is to help you stay healthy when COVID-19 illness is circulating in the community. Persons who are older or who have underlying health conditions are at higher risk to develop complications from this virus. Your health and the health of those you care about are important to us and it may be recommended that you stay at home and away from other people during this time. Preparing for this possibility requires some pre-planning. There are also some things that you can do to help to protect friends and loved ones from this illness if you do develop symptoms.

## What are the signs and symptoms of novel coronavirus?

The most common symptoms of novel coronavirus are fever and cough, sometimes breathing problems, more rarely sore throat, muscle aches, and abdominal discomfort. These symptoms can also be due to many other illnesses. If you develop a high fever or any severe symptoms (such as shortness of breath or difficulty breathing), it doesn't mean you have novel coronavirus, but you should follow up with your regular healthcare provider as soon as possible.

## How should you prepare for your health needs before COVID-19 is in the community?

- Make sure you can contact your regular healthcare provider when you need advice. Some clinics use the "patient portals" to communicate and most of them will have staff that can take your calls to give advice. Please keep in mind that they will likely be very busy if the virus is circulating so try to anticipate your needs.
- Make a list of those medicines that you need regularly and ask the pharmacy or your healthcare provider if you can have an extra supply or prescription.
- Keep track of any other medications or supplements that you take and monitor your current health conditions (e.g.; blood pressure, blood sugar) as directed.
- Keep up with your immunizations (e.g.; influenza, pneumonia, shingles and hepatitis A if you are a traveler).
- Identify a person(s) or social group who can help you if you need extra help and ask them to check up on you by phone or other ways to make sure you are okay. Make sure that they understand not to visit if they are not feeling well.
- Consider stocking up on extra food or personal hygiene supplies.
- Practice good health habits including washing your hands frequently with soap and water, covering coughs and sneezes and staying home when you don't feel well.

## What should you do if you become ill when COVID-19 is in the community?

- **Stay home and out of public places** (e.g., shopping centers, movie theaters, stadiums), workplaces (unless the work is in an office space that allows distancing from others), schools and other classroom settings, and local public conveyances (e.g., bus, subway, taxi, ride-share).
- **Write down any symptoms you may be having.** Record your temperature. Some medications can lower your body temperature, including aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid), Tylenol® (acetaminophen), Motrin® or Advil® (ibuprofen), Aleve® (naproxen). If you are taking one of these medications, please take your temperature **before** your next dose of medication. Write down your temperature.
- **Call your regular healthcare provider first. DO NOT GO to a clinic or hospital without first calling**

**ahead.** Calling first will help the clinic or hospital prepare to greet you and take care of you in the safest possible way. It may be recommended that you stay home and monitor your symptoms.

- **Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening** (e.g., shortness of breath or difficulty breathing). **Before seeking care**, call your healthcare provider. **Put on a facemask that covers your nose and mouth before you enter any facility or emergency vehicle.** After you put on the facemask, clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, separate yourself from other people and animals in your home.** As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available. Restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19, just like you would around people. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus. Have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with pets and wear a facemask. See [COVID-19 and Animals](#) for more information.
- **Clean your hands often.** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- **Cover your coughs and sneezes.** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Throw used tissues in a lined trash can and wash your hands with soap and water or apply alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- **Avoid sharing personal household items.** You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.
- **Clean all “high-touch” surfaces everyday:** Include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the label instructions.
- **Your caregivers, persons assisting you in your household, and people delivering food or items to your house should also take special precautions.**

## Where can you get more information?

- [Interim Guidance for Preventing the Spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) in Homes and Residential Communities](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- [Novel Coronavirus Outbreak 2020](#), Washington State Department of Health
- [2019 Novel Coronavirus, Wuhan, China](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- [Guidance for Travelers](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- [Senior Center Administrator and Employee Resources and Recommendations](#), Washington State Department of Health
- [Stigma Reduction](#), Washington State Department of Health
- Washington State Department of Health novel coronavirus call center: 1-800-525-0127 and press #