Catalyst
HEALTH NETWORK

HOW TO CARE FOR SOMEONE WHO IS SICK

CDC suggestions for caring for a COVID-19 patient at home
Updated 05/05/2020

Most people who get sick with COVID-19 will only have a mild form of the illness and should recover at home. The CDC has made the following suggestions for how you can take care of a COVID-19 positive individual at home.

ADVICE FOR CAREGIVERS

If you are caring for someone with COVID-19 at home or in a non-healthcare setting, follow this advice to protect yourself and others. Learn what to do when someone has symptoms of COVID-19. or when someone has been diagnosed with the virus. This information also should be followed when caring for people who have tested positive but are not showing symptoms.

NOTE: Older adults and people of any age with serious underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for developing more severe illness from COVID-19. People at higher risk of severe illness should call their doctor as soon as symptoms start.

MONITOR FOR EMERGENCY SIGNS

Monitor the person for worsening symptoms and know when it's time to seek medical attention. Have their healthcare provider's information on hand to call if they are getting sicker. In emergencies, call 911 and notify the dispatch personnel that they have or are suspected to have COVID-19. The emergency warning signs that require immediate medical attention are as follows:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability to arouse
- Bluish lips or face

NOTE: Use CDC's self-checker tool to help you make decisions about seeking appropriate medical care.

PREVENT THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Limit contact - COVID-19 spreads between people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets, created when someone talks, coughs or sneezes.

- The caregiver, when possible, should not be someone who is at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Use a separate bedroom and bathroom. If possible, have the person who is sick stay in their own "sick room" or area, preferably with a separate bathroom. away from others. If possible, have the person who is sick use a separate bathroom.
- Shared space: If you have to share space, make sure the room has good air flow.
    - *Open the window and turn on a fan (if possible) to increase air circulation.*
    - *Improving ventilation helps remove respiratory droplets from the air.*
- Avoid having any unnecessary visitors, especially visits by people who are at higher risk for severe illness.

Eat in separate rooms or areas

- **Stay separated:** The person who is sick should eat (or be fed) in their room, if possible.
- **Wash dishes and utensils using gloves and hot water:** Handle any dishes, cups/glasses, or silverware used by the person who is sick with gloves. Wash them with soap and hot water or in a dishwasher.
- Clean hands after taking off gloves or handling used items.

Avoid sharing personal items

- **Do not share:** Do not share dishes, cups/glasses, silverware, towels, bedding, or electronics (like a cell phone) with the person who is sick.

When to wear a cloth face cover or gloves

- **Sick person:**
    - The person who is sick should wear a cloth face covering when they are around other people at home and out (including before they enter a doctor's office).
    - The cloth face covering helps prevent a person who is sick from spreading the virus to others. It keeps respiratory droplets contained and from reaching other people.
    - Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is not able to remove the covering without help.

- **Caregiver:**
  - To prevent getting sick, make sure you practice everyday preventive actions: clean hands often; avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands; and frequently clean and disinfect surfaces.
  - Wear gloves when you touch or have contact with the sick person's blood, stool, or body fluids, such as saliva, mucus, vomit, and urine.
    - *Throw out gloves into a lined trash can and wash hands right away.*
  - The caregiver should ask the sick person to put on a cloth face covering before entering the room.
  - The caregiver may also wear a cloth face covering when caring for a person who is sick.

NOTE: During the COVID-19 pandemic, medical grade facemasks are reserved for healthcare workers and some first responders. You may need to make a cloth face covering using a scarf or bandana. Learn more here.

Clean your hands often

- **Wash hands:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Tell everyone in the home to do the same, especially after being near the person who is sick.
- **Hand sanitizer:** If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- **Hands off:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Clean and then disinfect

Around the house

- Clean and disinfect "high-touch" surfaces and items every day: This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, and electronics.
- Clean the area or item with soap and water if it is dirty. Then, use a household disinfectant.
  - Be sure to follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product. Many products recommend keeping the surface wet for several minutes to kill germs. Many also recommend wearing gloves, making sure you have good air flow, and wiping or rinsing off the product after use.
  - Most household disinfectants should be effective. A list of EPA-registered disinfectants can be found here.

- To clean electronics, follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products. If those directions are not available, use alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 70% alcohol.

Bedroom and Bathroom

- If you are using a separate bedroom and bathroom: Only clean the area around the person who is sick when needed, such as when the area is soiled. This will help limit your contact with the sick person.
    - *If they feel up to it, the person who is sick can clean their own space. Give the person who is sick personal cleaning supplies such as tissues, paper towels, cleaners, and EPA-registered disinfectants.*
- If sharing a bathroom: The person who is sick should clean and then disinfect after each use. If this is not possible, wear a mask and wait as long as possible after the sick person has used the bathroom before coming in to clean and use the bathroom.

Wash and dry laundry

- Do not shake dirty laundry.
- Wear disposable gloves while handling dirty laundry.
- Dirty laundry from a person who is sick can be washed with other people's items.
- Wash items according to the label instructions. Use the warmest water setting you can.
- Remove gloves, and wash hands right away.
- Dry laundry, on hot if possible, completely.
- Wash hands after putting clothes in the dryer.
- Clean and disinfect clothes hampers. Wash hands afterwards.

Use lined trash can

- Place used disposable gloves and other contaminated items in a lined trash can.
- Use gloves when removing garbage bags, and handling and disposing of trash. Wash hands afterwards.
- Place all used disposable gloves, facemasks, and other contaminated items in a lined trash can.
- If possible, dedicate a lined trash can for the person who is sick.

Track your own health

- Caregivers and close contacts should monitor their health for COVID-19 symptoms.
    - Symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath but other symptoms may be present as well. Trouble breathing is a more serious warning sign that you need medical attention.
- If you are having trouble breathing, call 911.

o   Call your doctor or emergency room and tell them your symptoms before going in. They will tell you what to do.

TREAT SYMPTOMS

- Make sure the sick person drinks a lot of fluids to stay hydrated and rests at home.
- Over-the-counter medicines may help with symptoms.
- For *most* people, symptoms last a few days and get better after a week.
- Monitor the patient's symptoms and notify a healthcare provider if symptoms worsen.

NOTE: While caring for someone who is sick, make sure to monitor your own health. If you develop symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, couch, shortness of breath), call your healthcare provider right away.

WHEN TO END HOME ISOLATION

People with COVID-19 who have stayed home (are home isolated) can stop home isolation under the following conditions:

- **If they will not have a test** to determine if they are still contagious, they can leave home after these three things have happened:
  - They have had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers)
    AND
  - Other symptoms have improved (for example, when their cough or shortness of breath have improved)
    AND
  - At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared

People who DID NOT have COVID-19 symptoms, but tested positive and have stayed home (home isolated) can leave home under the following conditions**:

- **If they have not had a test** to determine if they are still contagious, they can leave home after these two things have happened:
  - At least 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive test
    AND
  - they continue to have no symptoms (no cough or shortness of breath) since the test.
- **If they have had a test** to determine if they are still contagious, they can leave home after:

- o They have received two negative tests in a row, at least 24 hours apart. Their doctor will follow CDC guidelines.

NOTE: If they develop symptoms, follow guidance above for people with COVID-19 symptoms.

For ALL people

- When leaving the home, keep a distance of 6 feet from others and wear a cloth face covering when around other people.

NOTE: In all cases, **follow the guidance of your doctor and local health department.** The decision to stop home isolation should be made in consultation with their healthcare provider and state and local health departments. Some people, for example those with conditions that weaken their immune system, might continue to shed virus even after they recover.

Find more information on when to end home isolation here.