



Staying Safe at Home During the Coronavirus Crisis

To avoid being exposed to the coronavirus, it's important for everyone to stay at home. This is particularly true for older adults and people with some chronic conditions, who have a higher risk for complications from COVID-19—the illness caused by the coronavirus. The Eldercare Locator and the Alliance for Aging Research have teamed up to bring you the facts—so you can keep yourself and loved ones safe and healthy during this public health emergency.

Why Older Adults and People with Chronic Conditions are at Higher Risk

Our immune systems weaken as we age, making it harder to fight off infectious diseases. Cancer treatment, immune deficiencies, smoking and prolonged use of medications that weaken the immune system can also make it harder for the body to fight off the virus. People with certain chronic health conditions— including heart disease, lung diseases, obesity, diabetes or liver disease—also have a harder time fighting the virus.

Protecting Yourself

There is currently no vaccine available to prevent COVID-19 and no medication to treat it, so the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. COVID-19 is thought to spread primarily through respiratory droplets from coughs or sneezes. It may also be transmitted after

you have touched a surface or object with the virus on it and then touch your mouth, nose or eyes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises older adults to:

- Stay home
- If you do need to go out in public, stay at least 6 feet apart from others and wear a simple cloth face covering to help prevent the spread of the disease to others
- Avoid high-touch surfaces like elevator buttons, door handles and counters. If you must touch these surfaces, use a tissue or disposable wipe to touch them
- Don't touch your face, nose, eyes or mouth
- Wash your hands with soap and water often; hand sanitizers are ok to use if they contain at least 60% alcohol

Symptoms of COVID-19

Not everyone with COVID-19 will experience symptoms, or the symptoms may be mild enough that you don't realize you are infected, even though you are contagious. Symptoms of COVID-19 typically appear 2 to 14 days after exposure and may include:

- Fever
- Cough (usually a dry or unproductive cough)
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Loss of smell and taste
- Body aches
- Nausea, diarrhea, stomach aches or vomiting



