

# How to care for a person with COVID-19 at home: Advice for caregivers



If you are caring for a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, follow this advice to protect yourself and others in the home, as well as those in your community.

## Limit contact

- › Only one healthy person should provide care.
- › Do not share personal items with the ill person, such as toothbrushes, towels, bed linen, utensils or electronic devices.
- › Use a separate bathroom from the ill person, if possible.
  - If not possible, the ill person should put the toilet lid down before flushing.
- › Some people may transmit COVID-19 even though they do not show any **symptoms**. Wearing a **mask**, including a **non-medical mask** or face covering (i.e. made with at least two layers of tightly woven fabric, **constructed** to completely cover the nose and mouth without gaping, and secured to the head by ties or ear loops) can help protect others around you.
- › Prevent contact with animals, as there have been several reports of people transmitting COVID-19 to their pets.

## Protect yourself

- › If you are at **risk of more severe disease or outcomes**, you should not care for someone with COVID-19 (if possible).
- › If you need to be within 2 metres of the ill person, wear personal protective equipment:
  - a medical **mask**
  - disposable gloves
  - **eye protection**
- › Wear disposable gloves when touching the ill person, their environment and soiled items or surfaces.
- › Avoid re-using medical masks or gloves.
- › Clean your hands often for at least 20 seconds, especially after contact with the ill person and after removing gloves, face masks and eye protection.
- › Dry your hands with disposable paper towels.
  - If not available, use a reusable towel and replace it when it becomes wet.

- › You can also remove dirt with a wet wipe and then use an alcohol-based **hand sanitizer** containing at least 60% alcohol.
- › Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

## Wearing masks

- › **Medical masks** are recommended for people with COVID-19 in the home and to protect those providing direct care to them.
- › N95 respirators must be reserved for health care workers and should not be used for caregiving at home.
- › If medical masks are not available, **non-medical masks or face coverings** (i.e. **constructed** to completely cover the nose and mouth without gaping, and secured to the head by ties or ear loops) can be worn by the ill person, if tolerable. This will cover their mouth and nose, and may prevent respiratory droplets from contaminating others or landing on surfaces.
- › A **non-medical mask or face covering** may also be worn by those providing direct care to COVID-19 patients at home. However, wearing a non-medical mask or facial covering in the community has not been proven to protect the person wearing it.
- › Strict hygiene and public health measures, including frequent hand washing and maintaining a physical distance of at least 2 metres from the ill person, will reduce the chance of being exposed to the virus.
- › Non-medical cloth masks should be carefully removed when soiled or damp, laundered in hot water and then dried thoroughly.
- › Hands must be cleaned before and after putting on and removing a mask.

## Keep your environment clean

- › Place used medical masks, gloves and other contaminated items in a lined container, secure the contents and dispose of them with other household waste.
- › Place possibly contaminated laundry, including non-medical cloth masks and facial coverings, into a container with a plastic liner and do not shake.
  - Wash with regular laundry soap and hot water (60-90°C), and dry well.



- Clothing, linens and non-medical cloth masks and facial coverings belonging to the ill person can be washed with other laundry.
- › At least once daily, clean and disinfect surfaces that people touch often, such as toilets, laundry containers, bedside tables, doorknobs, phones and television remotes.
- › Use only **approved hard-surface disinfectants** that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms the disinfectant product is approved and safe for use in Canada.
- › When approved hard surface disinfectants are not available, for household disinfection, a diluted bleach solution can be prepared in accordance with the instructions on the label, or in a ratio of 5 millilitres (mL) of bleach per 250 mL of water OR 20 mL of bleach per litre of water. This ratio is based on bleach containing 5% sodium hypochlorite, to give a 0.1% sodium hypochlorite solution. Follow instructions for proper **handling of household (chlorine) bleach**.
- › If they can withstand the use of liquids for disinfection, high-touch electronic devices (e.g. keyboards, tablets, smartboards) may be disinfected with 70% alcohol (e.g. alcohol prep wipes) at least daily.

## Monitor yourself for symptoms

- › If you have always used the recommended precautions, then monitor yourself for **symptoms** for 14 days following your last close contact with the ill person.
- › **Quarantine (self-isolate)** at home for 14 days from your last exposure and contact your **local public health authority** if you have no symptoms but:
  - cared for a person who has COVID-19 without the recommended personal protective equipment
  - live with or had close physical contact (e.g. intimate partner) without using the recommended personal protective equipment
  - live with or have had regular close contact (within 2 metres) with a person who has COVID-19 up to 48 hours prior to symptom onset or while they were symptomatic and not isolating
  - had direct contact with the body fluids of a person who has COVID-19 (e.g. were coughed or sneezed on) without the recommended personal protective equipment

If you start to develop symptoms, **isolate** yourself as quickly as possible and contact your **local public health authority** for further instructions.

## Maintain these supplies

- Medical masks** if available, or **non-medical mask or face covering**
- Eye protection (face shield or goggles) for use by caregiver
- Disposable gloves (do not re-use) for use by caregiver
- Disposable paper towels
- Tissues
- Waste container with plastic liner
- Thermometer
- Over the counter medication to reduce fever (e.g. ibuprofen or acetaminophen)
- Running water
- Hand soap
- Alcohol-based **hand sanitizer** containing at least 60% alcohol
- Dish soap
- Regular laundry soap
- Regular household cleaning products
- One-step cleaner/disinfectant
- Hard surface disinfectant, or if not available, concentrated (5%) liquid bleach and a separate container for dilution
- Alcohol prep wipes or appropriate cleaning products for high-touch electronics

**We can all do our part in preventing the spread of COVID-19. For more information, visit**

Canada.ca/coronavirus  
or contact 1-833-784-4397