

How to advise your media audience on caring for COVID patients at home

People who test positive for COVID-19 are most likely to only experience mild symptoms and recover without requiring special treatment or hospitalisation.

Caring for patients with COVID-19 in their homes allows the provision of appropriate care, minimises the impact on the healthcare system and frees up hospital beds for patients with moderate or severe illness



How can I report on this issue?

Can someone who has been tested positive for COVID-19 be cared for at home?

People with no symptoms should be able to stay at home, if adequately isolated from others, but this should be confirmed by a doctor. Those with mild or moderate disease can be considered for home care if they are under the age of 60, do not smoke, are not obese, and do not have other diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, chronic lung disease, cancer, chronic kidney disease, immunosuppression.

A health worker will assess risk factors along with the person's symptoms, medical history and ability for the family to manage the care. Household members need to limit shared spaces, practice the recommended hygiene and know how to recognize and respond to signs of worsening health.

A trained health worker will need to assess whether the home in question is suitable for the isolation and care of a COVID-19 patient, and proper infection prevention control measures are put in place. Trained health workers are also important to support the patient and family in the home, or by phone, telemedicine, or outreach teams.

What should be done to prevent other people in the house from becoming sick if a person with COVID-19 is being cared for at home?

There are a number of precautions that can prevent the spread of COVID-19 to other people in the house:

- The ill person should stay in a separate room; if this is not possible, then keep at least a 1-metre distance from him or her.

- Provide good ventilation in the room of the ill person and shared spaces, and open windows if possible and safe to do so.
- The ill person should wear a medical mask as much as possible, in particular when not alone in the room and when a 1-metre distance from others cannot be maintained.
- Visitors should not be allowed in the home.
- Limit the number of caregivers to one person with no underlying conditions, if possible.
- The ill person should have dedicated dishes, cups, eating utensils, towels and bed linens. They should be washed with soap and water, and not shared.
- Frequently touched surfaces by the ill person should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily.
- Everyone in the household should wash their hands with soap and water regularly, especially:
 - after coughing or sneezing
 - before during and after you prepare food
 - before eating
 - after using the toilet
 - before and after caring for the ill person
 - when hands are visibly dirty
- A cough or sneeze should be covered with a flexed elbow or a disposable tissue that is discarded immediately after use.
- The waste from the ill person should be packed in strong closed bags before disposal.

How do you protect yourself while caring for someone with COVID-19 at home?

To protect yourself while caring for someone with COVID-19, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend:

- Keep your hands clean and away from your face. Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after being in close contact or in the same room as the sick person. If soap and water aren't available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Consider wearing a face mask. If you need to be in the same room with the person who is ill and he or she isn't able to wear a face mask, wear a face mask. Stay at least 6 feet (2 meters) away from the ill person. Don't touch or handle your mask while you are using it. If your mask gets wet or dirty, replace it with a clean, dry mask. Throw away the used mask and wash your hands.



- Clean your home frequently. Every day, use household cleaning sprays or wipes to clean surfaces that are often touched, including counters, tabletops and doorknobs. Avoid cleaning the sick person's separate room and bathroom. Set aside bedding and utensils for the sick person only to use.
- Be careful with laundry. Don't shake dirty laundry. Use regular detergent to wash the sick person's laundry. Use the warmest setting you can. Wash your hands after putting clothes in the dryer. Thoroughly dry clothes. If you are handling clothing that has been soiled by the sick person, wear disposable gloves and keep the items away from your body. Wash your hands after removing the gloves. Place dirty gloves and masks in a waste bin with a lid in the sick person's room. Clean and disinfect clothes hampers and wash your hands afterward.
- Be careful with dishes. Wear gloves when handling dishes, cups or utensils used by the sick person. Wash the items with soap and hot water or in the dishwasher. Clean your hands after taking off the gloves or handling used items.
- Avoid direct contact with the sick person's bodily fluids. Wear disposable gloves and a face mask when providing oral and respiratory care and when handling stool, urine or other waste. Wash your hands before and after removing your gloves and mask. Don't reuse your mask or gloves.
- Avoid having unnecessary visitors in your home. Don't allow visitors until the sick person has completely recovered and has no signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

How long should people with COVID-19 stay at home and in isolation?

People with COVID-19 who are cared for at home should stay in isolation until they are no longer able to transmit the virus to others:

- Those with symptoms should stay isolated for a minimum of 10 days after the first day they developed symptoms, plus another 3 days after the end of symptoms – when they are without fever and without respiratory symptoms.
- People without symptoms should stay isolated for a minimum of 10 days after testing positive.

What do we need to look out for in terms of COVID-19 warning signs in order to seek emergency medical care immediately for the person in home care?

Carefully monitor yourself or your loved one for worsening symptoms. If symptoms appear to be getting worse, call the doctor.

If you or the person with COVID-19 experiences emergency warning signs, medical attention is needed immediately. Call 911 or your local emergency number if the sick person can't be woken up or you notice any emergency signs, including:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent chest pain or pressure
- New confusion
- Bluish lips or face
- Inability to stay awake

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE IS SICK IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD

Life has to continue even where COVID-19 is spreading.
Here's how to stay safe.



1 ISOLATE THE SICK PERSON

Prepare a separate room or isolated space, and keep distance from others.



Keep the room well ventilated and open windows frequently.



2 REDUCE CONTACT WITH THE VIRUS

Identify one household member to be the contact person who is not at high risk and has the fewest contacts with people outside.



Wear a medical mask if in the same room as the sick person.

Use separate dishes, cups, eating utensils and bedding from the sick person.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.



3 TAKE CARE OF THE SICK PERSON

Monitor the sick person's symptoms regularly.



Pay special attention if the person is at high risk for serious illness.



Ensure the sick person rests and stays hydrated.



! DANGER SIGNS



Call your healthcare provider immediately if you see any of these **danger signs**:

- Difficulty breathing
- Confusion
- Loss of speech or mobility
- Chest pain

World Health Organization

