

Guidelines for elderly and high risk groups to safeguard from COVID-19 Outbreak

If a COVID-19 outbreak happens in a community, it may last for a long time. An outbreak is when a large number of people suddenly get sick. Depending on how severe the outbreak is, public health officials may recommend community actions that can slow the spread and reduce the impact of disease to reduce people's risk of being exposed to COVID-19.

People 60 years or above with any comorbidity are at high risk. They should keep themselves well hydrated, exercise and eat right as a routine practice. They should be upto date on how the coronavirus is affecting their area and follow the advisories given by the government as the situation evolves on **mohfw.gov.in**.

***People above 60 years of age with any of the following conditions:**

- Chronic heart disease; hypertension, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, people undergoing dialysis, chronic liver disease
- Chronic respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema, bronchitis, cystic fibrosis or severe asthma
- Chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
- Problems with spleen such as sickle cell disease, splenectomy
- Weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- People with organ transplant and remain on ongoing immunosuppression medication
- People with cancer undergoing active chemotherapy or radiotherapy, cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia who are at any stage of treatment

Dos:

- Keep in touch with family and friends through phone, internet and social media
- Use telephone or online services for other essential services, drug delivery, banking, grocery delivery etc
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol based hand sanitizer that contains at least 70% alcohol.
- Follow respiratory etiquettes. Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing and wash your hands/ sanitise them after throwing the tissue in a closed bin.
- Avoid touching surfaces in public places – elevator/ lift buttons, door handles, handrails. Use a tissue or their sleeve to cover your hand or finger if you must touch something.
- Avoid shaking hands with people, avoid hugging and kissing people.
- Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance with everyone.
- Contact the doctor to ask about obtaining extra necessary medicines to have at home in case of an outbreak of COVID-19 in their community and stay home for a prolonged period of time.
- Have enough household items and groceries on hand to be prepared to stay at home for a considerable period of time.
- Clean and disinfect home to remove germs: practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (for example: tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks & cell phones) using available disinfectant

Don'ts

- Do not touch eyes, nose and mouth with unclean, unwashed hands
- Do not travel if not necessary or essential
- Do not go to the hospital for routine health checkups and use telephone to contact the doctor
- Do not come in close contact with those who are sick/ not well
- Do not go for gatherings with friends and family and stay away from large gatherings

Watch for symptoms and emergency warning signs

- **Pay attention for potential COVID-19 symptoms** like fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you have symptoms, call helpline number **011-23978046; 1075**.
- **Wear mask, practice hand hygiene and take paracetamol for fever (avoid Ibuprofen).**
- **If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19** call helpline number **011-23978046, 1075 and get medical attention immediately.** In adults, emergency warning signs*:
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
 - New confusion or inability to arouse
 - Bluish lips or face

***This list is not all inclusive. Please consult the doctor for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.**

What others can do to support older adults?

Older people can be helped to feel more positive if they engage with the world and stay active. Don't lock them up and try to protect them. Make sure they are not immobile for long periods of time, watching television for long periods or remaining bed bound.

- Identify an emergency contact and keep the number on speed dial of the phone and also visibly displayed at home.
- Identify a caregiver in family or any community volunteer or police to help elderly by providing them essential supplies and keep a watch on general wellbeing of the elderly esp. who are staying alone. Also determine who can care for them if their caregiver gets sick.
- Community preparedness planning for COVID-19 should include older adults and people with disabilities, and the organizations that support them in their communities, to ensure their needs are taken into consideration.
- Provide psychosocial support.

Long-term care facilities (old age homes)

They should be vigilant to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19. Identify Nodal person for COVID response at the facility who shall look into the following

- Rapid identification and isolation of ill residents to designated health facilities
- Considerations for visitors and consultant staff
- Supplies and resources
- Surge capacity for staffing, equipment and supplies