

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



Most people who get sick with COVID-19 will have mild symptoms and should recover at home. Care at home can help stop the spread of COVID-19. If you are caring for, or live with a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and is well enough to recover at home, follow this guideline to protect yourself and others in the home, as well as those in your community.

By caring for a COVID-19 case in the home you may need to isolate/self-isolate for a total of 24 days. If this is not possible, have the COVID-19 case speak with their public health nurse about alternative isolation options.

## How do I support my family member or roommate at home?

The person with COVID-19 must isolate. This means they cannot leave their home unless they need urgent or emergency medical care. They need to be isolated from everyone else in the home, including pets. If possible, they should stay in a separate room or on a separate floor and use their own bathroom. If the person has to share a bathroom, regularly disinfect surfaces that are touched a lot (e.g., toilet, faucet, taps, door handles, light switches etc.).

Only one person should provide care for the person with COVID-19. People at higher risk should avoid caring for, or coming into close contact with the ill person. This includes people 60 years of age and older, those with weakened immune systems or those with underlying health problems. To reduce the potential spread of COVID-19 in the household, public health officials can assist with finding alternative accommodations for the ill person, or the household member who may be at higher risk of serious complications from COVID-19. For more information, the person with COVID-19 should speak to their public health official, or contact Health Links – Info Santé (**204-788-8200** or **1-888-315-9257**).

Public health officials will contact the person with COVID-19 regularly to assess their temperature, symptoms, well-being and respond to any questions or concerns. The person with COVID-19 should continue to isolate for a minimum of 10 days from the start of their symptoms and until they have been symptom free for 24 hours. The public health official will tell them when they can stop isolating. Precautions should remain in place for this entire time period until advised that isolation can be stopped.

Note that contact may be from someone from a regional health authority, the Public Health COVID-19 Contact Center, the Canadian Red Cross, 24/7 In Touch or other partners. Individuals may also be contacted by an automated call system or SMS text messages. Automated calls will be made to the number provided at the time of testing and occur between 9:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. seven days a week. To receive them, any anonymous call-blocking settings must be turned off on their phone. Individuals will continue to receive regular calls until they are symptom free and their case is closed. More information on case and contact management, including auto-dialer calls, SMS text messages and privacy concerns can be found at [manitoba.ca/covid19/testing/monitoring/index.html](https://manitoba.ca/covid19/testing/monitoring/index.html).

If the person with COVID-19 starts to feel worse, call Health Links – Info Santé (204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257). A nurse will assist you in determining whether or not a medical assessment is needed.

If the person with COVID-19 has any of the symptoms listed below:

- new or severe chest pain
  - trouble breathing
  - bluish lips or face
  - sudden confusion
  - symptoms of stroke, such as leg or arm weakness, numbness, slurred speech, or facial drooping
- Call 911.

It is important to seek medical attention early to get the care they need.

### **As the caregiver of someone with COVID-19, how can I lower my risk of getting sick?**

Being fully immunized for COVID-19 will significantly lower your risk of getting sick. Caregivers should be fully immunized if possible.

The person for whom you are caring should be able to do most of their own care (see Factsheet - [Isolation for Individuals with Symptoms and/or Waiting for COVID-19 Test Results](#)); however, the person may need help at times. As a caregiver, you can protect yourself by:

- Cleaning your hands frequently. Wash with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds and dry your hands thoroughly. You can also use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoiding direct contact with body fluids, particularly secretions that come from the mouth and nose such as saliva, coughs and sneezes.
- Wearing the proper personal protective equipment.
  - If you need to be within two metres (six feet) of the sick person, you should both wear a medical mask. Caregivers should also wear eye protection (eye glasses do not provide enough protection). Wash your hands after contact with the ill person.
  - Wear disposable gloves, a medical mask and eye protection when providing care that puts you in contact with their bodily fluids (e.g. mucous, phlegm, vomit, urine, stool).
- Using protective equipment safely.
  - Face masks should not be placed on children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who cannot remove the mask without help.
  - **When putting on protective equipment**, you should first wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60 per cent alcohol).
  - Put the mask on first by fastening it around your ears or tying it behind your head; then fit it by pinching across the bridge of your nose and pulling the bottom under your chin. Then put on eye protection and gloves.
  - **When removing protective equipment**, take off your gloves, clean your hands, then take off your eye protection and lastly, your mask. Clean your hands again.
  - Clean your hands well after all contact.

- Carefully handling waste from the person with COVID-19.
  - Waste (e.g., tissues, used masks, etc.) should be thrown out in a garbage bin lined with a plastic bag.
  - To throw out the garbage, tie the garbage bag and throw out with other household waste. Try not to touch your face or touch the garbage directly.
  - Wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer after handling household waste.
- Carefully doing laundry for the person with COVID-19.
  - Wear disposable gloves and a medical mask when handling the sick person's dirty laundry.
  - Place dirty laundry into a laundry bag or basket that is lined with a plastic bag. Do not shake.
  - Clothing and linens belonging to the ill person can be washed together with other laundry.
  - Use regular laundry soap and set your washing machine to sanitize or hot. Laundry should be thoroughly dried.
  - Take off your gloves, clean your hands and then take off your mask and clean your hands again.
  - If the laundry container comes in direct contact with the sick person's dirty laundry, disinfect it with a diluted bleach solution.

### **How can I lower the risk of COVID-19 spreading to others in the home?**

- Clean and disinfect high touch areas at least twice daily, or more often as needed (e.g., toilets, faucets, sinks, countertops, tables, light switches, door handles, electronics, remote controls, etc.).
- When cleaning and disinfecting, be sure to:
  - Wear disposable gloves.
  - 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 make sure you are using the product safely and effectively. Many products recommend keeping the surface wet for several minutes to kill germs. Many also recommend wearing gloves, making sure the space is well ventilated, and wiping or rinsing off the item or surface after use.
  - Disinfectants should contain at least 70 per cent alcohol, or be classified as an EPA registered household disinfectant. You can make your own disinfectant by mixing 20 ml (four teaspoons) bleach to one litre of water. The disinfectant should remain on the surface for one minute.
  - Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds when finished or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Flush toilets with the lid down.
- Avoid sharing personal items (e.g. toothbrushes, towels, washcloths, bed linen, cigarettes, unwashed eating utensils, drinks, phones, computers or other electronic devices).
- Avoid sharing food or drinks.
- Open the window, as the weather allows.

## What supplies do I need to care for someone in the home?

- medical or procedural masks
- disposable gloves
- eye protection
- thermometer
- fever-reducing medications
- running water
- hand soap
- alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60 per cent alcohol
- tissues
- waste container with plastic liner
- regular household cleaning products
- store bought disinfectant, or if not available, bleach and a separate container for dilution
- alcohol (70 per cent) prep wipes
- regular laundry soap
- dish soap
- disposable paper towels

## What can I do to stop the spread of COVID-19 outside of my home?

If you are caring for a family member or roommate, avoid contact with other people. Self-isolate (quarantine) and monitor yourself for any signs of illness (e.g., fever/chills, cough, sore throat/hoarse voice, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, or if you vomit or have diarrhea for more than 24 hours, or other symptoms listed on the COVID-19 screening tool) for 14 days from your last known close contact. By providing care you may need to isolate/self-isolate for a total of 24 days. If this is not realistic, consider having the case speak to their public health nurse about alternative isolation options. If you are fully immunized, you may not need to self-isolate, but you should self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms for 14 days from your last known close contact.

Use a delivery or pick-up service, or ask friends and family members to drop off groceries and supplies at your front door to avoid contact with other people. Do not allow visitors while caring for a household member with COVID-19. Cancel or notify any service providers who regularly come into your home that a household member is sick, has COVID-19, or is waiting for test results. This includes home care workers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, etc. The service providers will discuss how best to provide care during this time.

## For more information about COVID-19:

- Talk to your public health nurse.
- Call Health Links – Info Santé in Winnipeg at **204-788-8200**; toll free elsewhere in Manitoba **1-888-315-9257**.

### Visit:

- Manitoba government's COVID-19 website at [www.manitoba.ca/covid19/](http://www.manitoba.ca/covid19/)
- Government of Canada's COVID-19 website: [www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html)