



Coronavirus (COVID-19): Care Instructions Overview

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is caused by a virus. It causes a fever, a cough, and shortness of breath. It mainly spreads person-to-person through droplets from coughing and sneezing. The virus also can spread when people are in close contact with someone who is infected.

Most people have mild symptoms and can take care of themselves at home. If their symptoms get worse, they may need care in a hospital. There is no medicine to fight the virus.

It's important to not spread the virus to others. You need to isolate yourself while you are sick. Your doctor will tell you when you no longer need to be isolated. Leave your home only if you need to get medical care.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Get extra rest. It can help you feel better.
- Drink plenty of fluids. This helps replace fluids lost from fever. Fluids also help ease a scratchy throat. Water, soup, fruit juice, and hot tea with lemon are good choices.
- Take acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) to reduce a fever. It may also help with muscle aches. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Sponge your body with lukewarm water to help with fever. Don't use cold water or ice.
- Use petroleum jelly on sore skin. This can help if the skin around your nose and lips becomes sore from rubbing a lot with tissues.

Tips for isolation

- Wear a face mask, if you have one, when you are around other people. It can help stop the spread of the virus when you cough or sneeze.
- Limit contact with people in your home. If possible, stay in a separate bedroom and use a separate bathroom.
- Avoid contact with pets and other animals.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then throw it in the trash right away.
- Wash your hands often, especially after you cough or sneeze. Use soap and water, and scrub for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- Don't share personal household items. These include bedding, towels, cups and glasses, and eating utensils.
- Clean and disinfect your home every day. Use household cleaners and disinfectant wipes or sprays. Take special care to clean things that you grab with your hands. These include doorknobs, remote controls, phones, and handles on your refrigerator and microwave. And don't forget countertops, tabletops, bathrooms, and computer keyboards.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if you have life-threatening symptoms, such as:

- You have severe trouble breathing. (You can't talk at all.)
- You have constant chest pain or pressure.
- You are severely dizzy or lightheaded.
- You are confused or can't think clearly.
- Your face and lips have a blue color.
- You pass out (lose consciousness) or are very hard to wake up.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have moderate trouble breathing. (You can't speak a full sentence.)
- You are coughing up blood (more than about 1 teaspoon).
- You have signs of low blood pressure. These include feeling lightheaded; being too weak to stand; and having cold, pale, clammy skin.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your symptoms get worse.
- You are not getting better as expected.

Call before you go to the doctor's office. Follow their instructions. And wear a face mask if you have one.

Current as of: April 1, 2020

Author: [Healthwise Staff](#)

Medical Review: Heather Quinn MD - Family Medicine & Lesley Ryan MD - Family Medicine

©2006-2020 Healthwise, Incorporated. Healthwise, Healthwise for every health decision, and the Healthwise logo are trademarks of Healthwise, Incorporated. This care instruction is for use with your licensed healthcare professional. If you have questions about a medical condition or this instruction, always ask your healthcare professional. Healthwise, Incorporated disclaims any warranty or liability for your use of this information.