Leaving the Hospital After Treatment for COVID-19: Care Instructions

You are being sent home from the hospital after being treated for COVID-19. Being in the hospital can be hard, especially if you've been in the intensive care unit (ICU).

Even though you're going home, you probably don't feel well yet. Healing from COVID-19 takes time. You may feel very tired for weeks or months afterward, especially if you were on a ventilator. It will take time to get back to your old level of activity. Some people may have long-lasting health problems. But most people can look forward to feeling a little better every day.

If you were on a ventilator, your throat may be sore and your voice hoarse or raspy for a while.

After leaving the hospital, some people have feelings of anxiety and depression. They may have nightmares. Or in their mind they may relive events that happened in the hospital (flashbacks). You can always reach out to your doctor if you're having trouble with these symptoms.

Your doctor will tell you if you need to isolate yourself at home, and when you can end isolation.

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 plenty of rest. It can help you feel better.
- Be kind to yourself if it's taking longer than you expected to feel better. You've been through a stressful time.
- Get up and walk around every hour or two while you're resting. Slowly increase your activity as you start to feel better.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Drink plenty of fluids. If you have kidney, heart, or liver disease and have to limit fluids, talk with your doctor before you increase the amount of fluids you drink.
- Take acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) to reduce a fever. It may also help with muscle aches. Read and follow all instructions on the label.

If you are in isolation after you get home

- Wear a cloth face cover 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.
- If you have to leave home, avoid crowds and try to stay at least 6 feet away from other people.

- 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.
- Wash laundry in the warmest water allowed for the fabric type, and dry it completely. It's okay to wash other people's laundry with yours.
- 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 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 passed out (lost 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.
- You have new or worse symptoms of anxiety, depression, nightmares, or flashbacks.

Call before you go to the doctor's office. Follow their instructions. And wear a cloth face cover.