

## COVID-19: Caring for older adults



### Protecting the most vulnerable population

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Although young and previously healthy people have contracted and been seriously ill with COVID-19, the most vulnerable population group remains older adults. Specifically, research shows that adults over 60, especially those with preexisting medical conditions, such as heart or lung disease, diabetes or cancer, are more likely than other adults in other age groups to have a severe case.

If you're caring for an older adult, here's some steps you can take to help keep them healthy – and be prepared if either you or they contract the COVID-19 virus.

#### Keep yourself well

You can't keep someone else healthy if you end up carrying the virus – even if you don't have symptoms. Wash your hands, go out only when necessary, wear a cloth face covering in public, and keep frequently touched surfaces in your home clean, especially the items an older person might use, such as walkers, canes and handrails.

#### Keep your loved ones connected

Just like everyone else, older people need to feel connected to others. Technology can help, and if someone isn't familiar with all the options, now's the time to show them how to:

- **Video chat** with friends and family using smartphones, laptops, or tablets
- **Use apps** with captions, if they have difficulty with hearing
- **Stay in touch** with their house of worship by attending online services

If you have an older relative or friend who lives alone or with another senior citizen, call them regularly to see how they're doing. Do they have someone who is shopping for them so they don't have to go out? Are they coping with everyday chores or do they need help? Are they getting stressed out watching the news 24/7 or do they have hobbies they can turn to for relaxation?

#### Help them reduce the risk of infection

See if they can postpone unnecessary doctor's visits, such as an annual checkup. Perhaps they can use telemedicine for some appointments. Help them stock up on not just a few weeks of food and other essentials, but also one to three months of medications. Make sure one person is designated as the one who will go shopping for them if needed and devise a way for that person to drop off their groceries without or at least with minimal contact.



## 8 in 10 fatalities

from COVID-19 have been adults age 65 and older.

## If you become ill

Make sure someone can step in for you if you're someone else's main caregiver and you become ill. Now's the time to make these plans — not when you're unwell and less likely to have the energy to make phone calls and new plans.

## If they become ill

It's best for anyone — not just those over 60 — to develop a care plan in case they become infected with COVID-19. This includes a list of current health conditions, medications, health care providers, health insurance information, emergency contacts and advance directives. The CDC provides a convenient complete care form that anyone can use at <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/caregiving/pdf/Complete-Care-Plan-Form-508.pdf>.

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