

COVID-19 Recommendations for Older Adults

What do older adults need to know?

One of the goals of the Canadian Geriatrics Society (CGS) is to foster the health and well-being of older Canadians and older adults worldwide. As there is currently no vaccine available to prevent COVID-19 and no specific antiviral medication to treat it, **the best way to prevent illness is to avoid virus exposure.**

Who is high risk for severe illness from COVID-19?

Available statistics indicate the following groups as high-risk:

1. Adults aged 60 and older and/or
2. People with heart disease, respiratory disease and diabetes are at increased risk of severe COVID-19 illness.

What should seniors do?

1. Take any illness seriously

COVID-19 may start like a common cold or mild flu; however, in elderly people it may worsen quickly. Pay attention for potential COVID-19 symptoms, including fever, cough and shortness of breath.

If you have mild symptoms or have had contact with someone who has tested positive for the virus, call your doctor, [health unit](#) or pharmacist. They will tell you if you need to be tested for COVID-19 and where to go.

Go to the hospital immediately if you develop any of the following symptoms:

- **Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath**
- **Persistent pain or pressure in the chest**
- **New confusion or inability to wake from sleep**
- **Blue lips or face**

2. Stay informed

Your local health unit has the most up-to-date and accurate information. Many health units have social media accounts, which will be the fastest and most reliable information for your specific area, including how to stay safe and what to do if you think you may be infected.

- [Click here for links to health units by province](#)
- Check [CBC](#) and local news

3. Wash your hands with soap and water often and thoroughly

[Click here for the recommended method for hand washing.](#)

Avoid touching your face especially your mouth, eyes and nose.

Avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places – these include elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, grocery cart handles, etc. Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand or fingers or use your elbow instead. Use hand sanitizer when you can't wash your hands.

You can help by cleaning frequently touched surfaces (for example, tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks and cell phones).

4. Social distancing

Avoid people who have recently travelled.

Limit how many people you interact with and keep person-to-person distance to two metres (six feet) away whenever possible.

Only travel when necessary. Avoid public transportation as much as possible. Avoid touching your face. If you have appointments, call ahead to check for the latest closures. Look for delivery services or help from others.



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5. Have a plan

Canadians can call 211 on a telephone or visit 211.ca to get information about local supports. See <http://211.ca/news/covid-19-information-sources-canadian-residents/>

Medications:

- Have a regular supply of medications (over-the-counter as well as prescription) in your home.
- Call your pharmacist BEFORE you run out and need more of any medication. Ask if they deliver. If you cannot get extra medications, consider using mail-order from a reliable source for medications.
- Have a written list of ALL medications.
- Monitor medical supplies (oxygen, incontinence, dialysis and wound care) needed and create a back-up plan.

Groceries/Household Items:

- Ensure you have phone numbers of people who could do errands for you, including backup if your caregiver gets sick.
- Have enough household items and groceries on hand so that you will be prepared to stay at home for at least one week and a plan for if you cannot go out of the house for two weeks.
- Stock up on nutrient-dense and non-perishable food to have on hand in your home in order to minimize trips to stores.

Caregiver Supports:

- Determine who can care for you if your caregiver gets sick.



What others can do to support older adults

These recommendations are intended for family and caregivers supporting older adults:

- **Know what medications your loved one is taking** and see if you can help them have extra medication available on hand.
- **Monitor food and other medical supplies** (oxygen, incontinence, dialysis and wound care) needed and create a back-up plan.
- **Stock up on non-perishable food** to have on hand in your home in order to minimize trips to stores.
- If you care for a loved one living in a care facility, monitor the situation, ask about the health of the other residents frequently, and know the outbreak protocol of that facility.