

Be Red Cross Ready

Prepare so you can protect.



Older Adults and COVID-19

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions](#) like heart or lung disease or diabetes appear to be at higher risk for developing serious complications from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19, which means the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

Know the COVID-19 symptoms and additional steps you may be able to take to protect yourself by visiting the CDC website at [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus). Use this tip sheet to help protect yourself and your loved ones.

Create a personal support network

- **Create a personal support network made up of several trusted individuals that can help you.** Assign them practical things that they can do to help. For example, helping you set up your phone, or computer so you can use text and video call features. They may be able to help you with errands, getting groceries, and doing online shopping. They should check in with you regularly by phone or video calls to ensure your wellness. Share your important health and medical information with them and be sure they know how they can help you.

Stay home as much as possible and avoid close contact with others

- **Stay home as much as possible and avoid close contact with people who do not share your home.** Most states are gradually allowing businesses to re-open while employing a range of specific mitigation strategies to slow the spread of COVID-19. It is important for older adults to understand that while many businesses are reopening, [mitigation strategies](#) include protecting individuals at increased risk for severe illness, including older adults and individuals of any age with underlying health conditions. Therefore, older adults should continue to avoid all non-essential outings, and large and small gatherings in private and in public. Only go out to purchase essential supplies if they cannot be delivered, for exercise and walking pets, or to visit medical professionals or leave during an emergency.
- **Limit visits with family members, especially young children.** While you may need family members to help run errands, keep about 6 feet away from them and wear a [cloth face covering](#). Have visitors leave food or grocery items at the door rather than entering your home. Avoid inviting young children into your home because it is difficult for them to understand the importance of physical distancing.
- **Discuss with your doctor whether it would be better to conduct visits face-to-face or through telemedicine.** Telemedicine allows doctors to meet with patients virtually, through live video, audio, or instant messaging. Follow the guidance of your primary care providers and specialists on whether to conduct healthcare visits via video, phone, email, or face-to-face, and when and how best to get lab work and other tests and procedures done. A friend or family member can help you arrange healthcare visits via video or phone if your doctor recommends them.
- **Stay connected with your loved ones through video calls, phone calls, texts, or social media.**
- **Know the COVID-19 symptoms and additional steps you may be able to take to protect yourself** at [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

In public, wear a cloth face covering *and* practice physical distancing

- **When in public, cover your mouth and nose with a [cloth face covering](#) *and* practice physical distancing by keeping 6 feet between you and others.** Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unable to remove it without help. Detailed information on cloth face coverings is available at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html)

Have a 1-month supply of medications and a 2-week supply of food and supplies

To avoid unnecessary trips, have a **1-month supply of medications and 2-week supply of food and supplies.**

- **A 1-month supply of prescription medication includes over-the-counter medications like cough suppressants, fever reducing drugs, a thermometer, and other medical supplies or equipment.** Ask your physician or local pharmacy if

prescriptions can be delivered to your home, or if you can pick them up at a drive thru. Order medication refills as you normally would.

- **A 2-week supply of food also includes water, household cleaning and disinfection supplies, soap, paper products, and personal hygiene items.** Contact your local grocery stores to see if they offer online ordering with options for contact-free home delivery or curbside pick-up.

Plan for what you will do if you get sick

- **Have a care plan in place for yourself.** A care plan summarizes your health conditions, medications, healthcare providers, emergency contacts, and end-of-life care options, for example, advance directives (a living will). Complete your care plan in consultation with your doctor, and if needed, with help from a family member. Decide who will care for you should you become ill. Make sure that they understand your medical needs, and that they have a copy of your care plan. The CDC has guidance on developing a [care plan](#) and a [fillable care plan form](#) to help you.

Take everyday steps to stay healthy

- **Clean your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.** Soap and water are always preferable, but if soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- **Always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze** or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash. Immediately wash your hands afterwards.
- **Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.** This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks. Detailed information on cleaning and disinfecting your home is available at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html)

Beware of scams

- Unfortunately, scammers are taking advantage of people’s fears and the [Federal Trade Commission](#) has tips to help protect you and others. There currently are no vaccines, pills, lotions or other prescription or over-the-counter products available to treat or cure COVID-19 online or in stores. Beware of “viral videos” suggesting potentially dangerous or toxic home preventatives, such as drinking excessive amounts of water or mouthwash.

Coping with stress

- Fear and anxiety about the COVID-19 pandemic can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions. See [redcross.org/coronavirus](https://www.redcross.org/coronavirus) for information on coping with stress. Complete a free online course from the Red Cross on [Psychological First Aid: Supporting Yourself and Others During COVID-19](#).

Additional Resources

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Center for Disease Control at cdc.gov/coronavirus• American Red Cross at redcross.org/coronavirus• National Institute on Aging at nia.nih.gov• Call 211 for local resources. Or visit 211search.org to find a referral center near you• See auntbertha.com and eldercare.acl.gov for local resources• AARP at aarp.org/coronavirus and aarp.org/crf• Find your local food bank at feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank. Call first to check requirements• Contact HOPE Crisis Hotline at 1-888-388-HOPE (4673) or go to OperationHOPE.org for free virtual support on managing the financial impacts of COVID-19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Disaster Distress Helpline: Available to anyone experiencing emotional distress related to COVID-19. Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to speak to a caring counselor<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Deaf/Hard of Hearing. Text TalkWithUs to 66746. Use your preferred relay service to call 1-800-985-5990. TTY 1-800-846-8517○ Spanish Speakers. Call 1-800-985-5990 and press "2" or from the 50 States, text Hablanos to 66746. From Puerto Rico, text Hablanos to 1-787-339-2663• If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions such as sadness, depression, anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or someone else, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) |
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