

Learning How to Care for Someone Who Has COVID-19

What do you need to know?

Most people who get COVID-19 will recover with time and home care. Here are some things to know if you're caring for someone who's sick.

- Treat the symptoms.
Common symptoms include a fever, coughing, and feeling short of breath. Urge the person to get extra rest and drink plenty of fluids to replace fluids lost from fever.

To reduce a fever, offer acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin). It may also help with muscle aches. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Watch for signs that the illness is getting worse.
The person may need medical care if they're getting sicker (for example, if it's hard to breathe). But call the doctor's office before you go. They can tell you what to do.

Call 911 or emergency services if the person has any of these symptoms:

- Severe trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- Constant pain or pressure in their chest
- Confusion, or trouble thinking clearly
- Pale, gray, or blue-colored skin or lips

Some people are more likely to get very sick and need medical care. Call the doctor as soon as symptoms start or the person tests positive for COVID-19. This is especially important if the person you're caring for is not up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines, is over 65, smokes, or has a serious health problem like asthma, heart disease, diabetes, or an immune system problem. They may need medicine to prevent serious illness.

How can you protect yourself and others?

When you're caring for someone with COVID-19, keep the sick person away from others as much as you can. The virus spreads easily from person to person, so take extra care to avoid catching or spreading the infection. Here are some ways to protect yourself and others.

- Have the person stay in one room.
If you can, give them their own bathroom to use.
- Have only one person take care of them.
Keep other people—and pets—out of the sickroom.
- Have the person wear a high-quality mask around other people.
This includes when anyone is in the room with them or if they leave their room (for example, to go to the bathroom).
- Don't share personal items.
These include dishes, cups, towels, and bedding.
- Wash your hands often and well.

Use soap and water, and scrub for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after you've been around the sick person or touched things they've touched. If soap and water aren't handy, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- Wear a high-quality mask when caring for someone who is sick.
And wear a mask when you're around other people after you've cared for someone who's sick. For 10 days after your last exposure to the ill person, make sure to wear a mask when you are around other people. You should also get tested for COVID. You may need more than one test. If you test positive, isolate right away
- Improve airflow.
If you have to spend time indoors with others, open windows and doors. Or you can use a fan to blow air away from people and out a window.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes.
- Take care with the person's laundry.
It's okay to wash the sick person's laundry with yours. If you have them, wear disposable gloves when handling their dirty laundry, and wash your hands well after you touch it. Wash items in the warmest water allowed for the fabric type, and dry them completely.
- Clean high-touch items every day and anytime the sick person touches them.
These include doorknobs, light switches, toilets, counters, and remote controls. Use a household disinfectant or a homemade bleach solution. (Follow the directions on the label.) If the sick person has their own room, have them disinfect it every day.
- Avoid having visitors.
If you have to have visitors, everyone needs to wear a mask. And keep the visit as short as possible. To help protect family and friends, stay in touch with them only by phone or computer.

Go to the CDC website at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) if you have questions.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/PatientEd>

Enter **A137** in the search box to learn more about **"Learning How to Care for Someone Who Has COVID-19"**.

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