

# CARING FOR SOMEONE SICK AT HOME

HOW TO QUARANTINE AND  
ISOLATE SAFELY AT HOME



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**  
HEALTH  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

 KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health

 KZN Department of Health

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**STAY  
SAFE**  
SAVE SOUTH AFRICA  
TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT THE CORONAVIRUS

**GROWING  
KWAZULU-NATAL  
TOGETHER**

## Advice for caregivers in non-healthcare settings<sup>1</sup>

If you are caring for someone with COVID-19 at home or in a non-healthcare setting, follow this advice to protect yourself and others. Learn what to do when someone has symptoms of COVID-19 or when someone has been diagnosed with the virus. This information also should be followed when caring for people who have tested positive but are not showing symptoms.

*\*Note: Older adults and people of any age with serious underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for developing more severe illness from COVID-19. People at higher risk of severe illness should call their doctor as soon as symptoms start.*

### Provide support



- Help cover basic needs
- Make sure the person who is sick drinks a lot of fluids and rests
- Help the person who is sick follow their doctor's instructions for care and medicine.
- For most people, symptoms last a few days, and people usually feel better after a week.
- See if over-the-counter medicines for fever help the person feel better.
- Make sure the person who is sick drinks a lot of fluids and rests.
- Help them with grocery shopping, filling prescriptions, and getting other items they may need.
- Consider having the items delivered through a delivery service, if possible.
- Take care of their pet(s), and limit contact between the person who is sick and their pet(s) when possible.

Adapted from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html>

## Watch for warning signs

- Have their doctor's phone number on hand.
- Use the box below to help you make decisions about seeking appropriate medical care.
- Call their doctor if the person keeps getting sicker. For medical emergencies, call 112 or 10177 and tell the dispatcher that the person has or might have COVID-19.

### When to seek emergency medical attention

Look for emergency warning signs\* for COVID-19. If someone is showing any of these signs, seek emergency medical care immediately:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

\*This list is not all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

## Protect yourself

### Limit contact



- Keep a separate bedroom and bathroom for a person who is sick
- COVID-19 spreads between people who are in close contact through respiratory droplets, created when someone talks, coughs or sneezes. Staying away from others helps stop the spread of COVID-19.
- The caregiver, when possible, should not be someone who is at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Adapted from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html>

## **The person who is sick should isolate**

The sick person should separate themselves from others in the home. Learn when and how to isolate.

- If possible, have the person who is sick use a separate bedroom and bathroom. If possible, have the person who is sick stay in their own “sick room” or area and away from others. Try to stay at least 2 metres away from the sick person.
- Shared space: If you have to share space, make sure the room has good air flow.
  - Open the window to increase air circulation.
  - Improving ventilation helps remove respiratory droplets from the air.
- Avoid having visitors. Avoid having any unnecessary visitors, especially visits by people who are at higher risk for severe illness.

## **Caregivers should quarantine**

Caregivers and anyone who has been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 should stay home. Learn when and how to quarantine.

When it's safe for a person who has been sick to be around others

Deciding when it is safe to be around others is different for different situations. Find out when someone who is sick can safely end home isolation.

## **Eat in separate rooms or areas**

- Stay separated: The person who is sick should eat (or be fed) in their room, if possible.
- Wash dishes and utensils using gloves and hot water: Handle any dishes, cups/glasses, or silverware used by the person who is sick with gloves. Wash them with soap and hot water or in a dishwasher.
- Clean hands after taking off gloves or handling used items.

## **Avoid sharing personal items**

- Do not share: Do not share dishes, cups/glasses, silverware, towels, bedding, or electronics (like a cell phone) with the person who is sick.

## **When to wear a mask or gloves**

### **The person who is sick**

- The person who is sick should wear a mask when they are around other people at home and out (including before they enter a doctor’s office).
- The mask helps prevent a person who is sick from spreading the virus to others. It keeps respiratory droplets contained and from reaching other people.
- Masks should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is not able to remove the covering without help.

## Caregiver

- Put on a mask and ask the sick person to put on a mask before entering the room.
- Wear gloves when you touch or have contact with the sick person's blood, stool, or body fluids, such as saliva, mucus, vomit, and urine. Throw out gloves into a lined trash can and wash your hands right away.
- Practice everyday preventive actions to keep from getting sick: wash your hands often; avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth; and frequently clean and disinfect surfaces.

**Note:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, medical grade masks are reserved for healthcare workers and some first responders.

## Clean your hands often

- Wash hands: Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Tell everyone in the home to do the same, especially after being near the person who is sick.
- Hand sanitizer: If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 70% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Hands off: Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Learn more about handwashing.

## Clean and then disinfect



Clean and disinfect “high-touch” surfaces and items every day

Adapted from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html>

## **Around the house**

- Clean and disinfect “high-touch” surfaces and items every day: This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, and electronics.
- Clean the area or item with soap and water if it is dirty. Then, use a household disinfectant.
- Be sure to follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product. Many products recommend keeping the surface wet for several minutes to kill germs. Many also recommend wearing gloves, making sure you have good air flow, and wiping or rinsing off the product after use.
- Most household disinfectants should be effective.
- To clean electronics, follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products. If those directions are not available, use alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 70% alcohol.
- Learn more about cleaning and disinfecting your home.

## **Bedroom and bathroom**

- If you are using a separate bedroom and bathroom: Only clean the area around the person who is sick when needed, such as when the area is soiled. This will help limit your contact with the sick person.
- If they feel up to it, the person who is sick can clean their own space. Give the person who is sick personal cleaning supplies such as tissues, paper towels, cleaners.
- If sharing a bathroom: The person who is sick should clean and then disinfect after each use. If this is not possible, wear a mask and wait as long as possible after the sick person has used the bathroom before coming in to clean and use the bathroom.

## **Wash and dry laundry**

- Do not shake dirty laundry.
- Wear disposable gloves while handling dirty laundry.
- Dirty laundry from a person who is sick can be washed with other people’s items.
- Wash items according to the label instructions. Use the warmest water setting you can.
- Remove gloves, and wash hands right away.
- Dry laundry, on hot if possible, completely.
- Wash hands after putting clothes in the dryer.
- Clean and disinfect clothes hampers. Wash hands afterwards.

## Use lined trash can



Use gloves when handling trash (If gloves are not available, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water and dry with clean towel afterwards).

- Place used disposable gloves and other contaminated items in a lined trash can.
- Use gloves when removing garbage bags, and handling and disposing of trash. Wash hands afterwards.
- Place all used disposable gloves, masks, and other contaminated items in a lined trash can.
- If possible, dedicate a lined trash can for the person who is sick.

## Track your own health

- Caregivers should stay home and monitor their health for COVID-19 symptoms while caring for the person who is sick.
- Symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath but other symptoms may be present as well. Trouble breathing is a more serious warning sign that you need medical attention.
- Caregivers should continue to stay home after care is complete. Caregivers can leave their home 10 days after their last close contact with the person who is sick (based on the time it takes to develop illness), or 10 days after the person who is sick meets the criteria to end home isolation.
- The best way to protect yourself and others is to stay home for 10 days if you think you've been exposed to someone who has COVID-19. Check your local health department's website for information about options in your area to possibly shorten this quarantine period.
- If you are having trouble breathing, call your doctor or emergency room and tell them your symptoms before going in. They will tell you what to do.

### Who is at higher risk of getting very sick if infected with covid19?

- Elderly people (greater than 60 years old)
- People who are overweight
- People living with diabetes
- People living with hypertension and or heart disease
- People living with HIV
- People with a suppressed immune system e.g. with cancer
- People living with other chronic medical conditions

**NB: If you are not able to receive the support you need to quarantine or isolate safely at home or feel that your home is unable to provide a safe space to do so, please let your healthcare worker know so that they can arrange a safe place for you. This way you protect your loved ones from getting infected.**

1. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Caring for Someone Sick at Home. Advice for caregivers in non-healthcare settings. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html>2020.

