

# Healthy Aging

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## Coronavirus

What do older adults and people with disabilities need to know?

Image Credit: CDC/ Alissa Eckert, MS; Dan Higgins, MAMS

Compiled by  
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**Many of you have heard of coronavirus**, and you may have heard it called Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Older people are more likely to have serious COVID-19 related illnesses when contracting this virus. This may be because immune systems change with age, making it harder to fight off diseases and infection. Older adults also are more likely to have underlying health conditions that make it harder to cope with and recover from illness.

### Don't Be Fooled:

Scammers are offering COVID-19 tests to Medicare beneficiaries in exchange for personal details

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Older adults and people who have chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, lung and kidney disease or hypertension are at higher risk for complications from COVID-19.

**If you are at higher risk, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends five steps for washing hands:**

1. Wet hands with clean, running water (warm or cold).
2. Apply soap.
3. Lather the backs of hands,

between fingers, and under fingernails.

4. Scrub hands for at least 20 seconds.
5. Dry hands thoroughly.

### Other Precautions

- ▶ Avoid close contact (at least six feet or about two arm lengths) with people who are sick.
- ▶ Put as much distance as possible between yourself and other people if COVID-19 is spreading in your community.

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## Need to Know

- ▮ Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- ▮ Avoid all cruise travel and non-essential air travel.
- ▮ Call your healthcare professional if you have concerns about COVID-19 and your underlying condition or if you are sick.

**If you or someone you care about are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression or anxiety, or if you feel like you want to harm yourself or others, immediately call**

- ▮ 911
- ▮ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517)

Older people are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, which may result in increased stress during a crisis. Fear and anxiety about the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>1</sup> can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions.

### Things you can do to support yourself

- ▮ Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories and social media. Hearing about the disease repeatedly can be upsetting.
- ▮ Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- ▮ Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- ▮ Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- ▮ Try to arrange telehealth sessions for appointments you need to keep on schedule.

### Planning is key!

Creating a household plan can help protect your health and the health of those you care about. You should base the details of your household plan on the needs and daily routine of your household members.

A household plan of action should include the following:

- ▮ **Talk with the people who need to be included in your plan.** Meet with household members, other relatives and friends to discuss what to do if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in your community and what the needs of each person will be.

▲ Image Credit: CDC/ Alissa Eckert, MS; Dan Higgins, MAMS

1. Pandemic means a disease widespread over a whole country or the world.

- **Plan ways to care for those who might be at greater risk for serious complications.** There is limited information about who may be at risk for severe complications from COVID-19 illness. Early data suggest older people are more likely to have serious COVID-19 illness. CDC recommends actions to help keep people at high risk for complications healthy if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in your community.
- **Get to know your neighbors.** Talk with your neighbors about emergency planning. If your neighborhood has a website or social media page, consider joining it to maintain access to neighbors, information and resources.
- **Identify aid organizations in your community.** Create a list of local organizations that you and your household can contact in the event you need access to information, health care services, support or resources. Consider including organizations that provide mental health or counseling services, food and other supplies.
- **Create an emergency contact list.** Ensure your household has a current list of emergency contacts for family, friends, neighbors, carpool drivers, health care providers, teachers, employers, the local public health department and other community resources.
- **Practice everyday preventive actions now.** Remind everyone in your household of the importance of practicing everyday preventive actions that can help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person:
 
  - Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
  - When an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- The virus can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or cough into your elbow.

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## Need to Know

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects like tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs and cabinet handles on a daily basis. If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent and water prior to disinfection. A list of Environmental Protection Agency–approved disinfectants includes bleach, sanitizing wipes and Lysol. For more information about disinfecting products, visit <https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol. Always wash your hands with soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.

- **Choose a room in your home that can be used to separate sick household members from those who are healthy.** Identify a separate bathroom for the sick person to use, if possible. Plan to clean these rooms, as needed, when someone is sick.

### How can I prepare to be at home for an extended period of time?

Here are some simple ways to prepare:

#### Getting Medicines and Medical Supplies:

Ask your physician or local pharmacy if ordering your medicines online is an option. Many online pharmacies (including national chains) will fill valid prescriptions and ship them directly to your door, allowing you to avoid going to the pharmacy in person. Also, be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies (fever reducers, tissues, hydrating beverages, etc.) to treat fever and other symptoms.

#### Ordering Groceries:

Have enough basic household items and groceries on hand so you are prepared to stay at home for an extended period of time. Most major grocery chains have made it possible to order groceries online and have them delivered to your door within hours or days. Check the websites of local or national grocery stores that may allow you to select your items online and then arrange for shipping. Keep in mind, however, that many of these services are experiencing delays due to the high volume of people choosing the safety of online ordering rather than in-person shopping. This means you will need to plan ahead. If you have questions or concerns about the delivery timeline, speak to a customer service representative.



### Watch for symptoms and emergency warning signs

- ▶ The main symptoms of COVID-19, which may appear between two and 14 days after exposure, include fever, cough and difficulty breathing or shortness of breath. If you feel like you are developing symptoms, call your doctor. Some people with COVID-19 might have no symptoms, have only mild symptoms, or have symptoms that are similar to the flu or seasonal allergies. However, these people can still be contagious.
- ▶ If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19, get medical attention immediately. These include:
  - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
  - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
  - New confusion or inability to wake up
  - Bluish lips or face
  - This list is not all-inclusive. Consult your medical provider for any other symptom that is severe or concerning.

### For more information and resources go to:

- ▶ Administration for Community Living at [www.acl.gov/COVID-19](https://www.acl.gov/COVID-19)
- ▶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov)
- ▶ Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services at <https://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/communicable/novel-coronavirus/>
- ▶ Missouri COVID -19 24 hour hotline: 877-435-8411

### References

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- Content Source: Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Last modify 3/19/2020, <https://acl.gov/COVID-19>
- Content Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), COVID-19. Older Adults, Page last reviewed March 18, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications/older-adults.html>
- Content Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), COVID-19, How to Protect Yourself, Page Last Reviewed March 18, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>
- Content Source: Alliance for Aging Research: National Foundation For Infectious Disease, March 12, 2020 <https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/common/AOA%20-%20Alliance%20for%20Aging%20Rsch%20-%20Natl%20Fdn%20for%20ID%20-%2003-12-20.pdf>

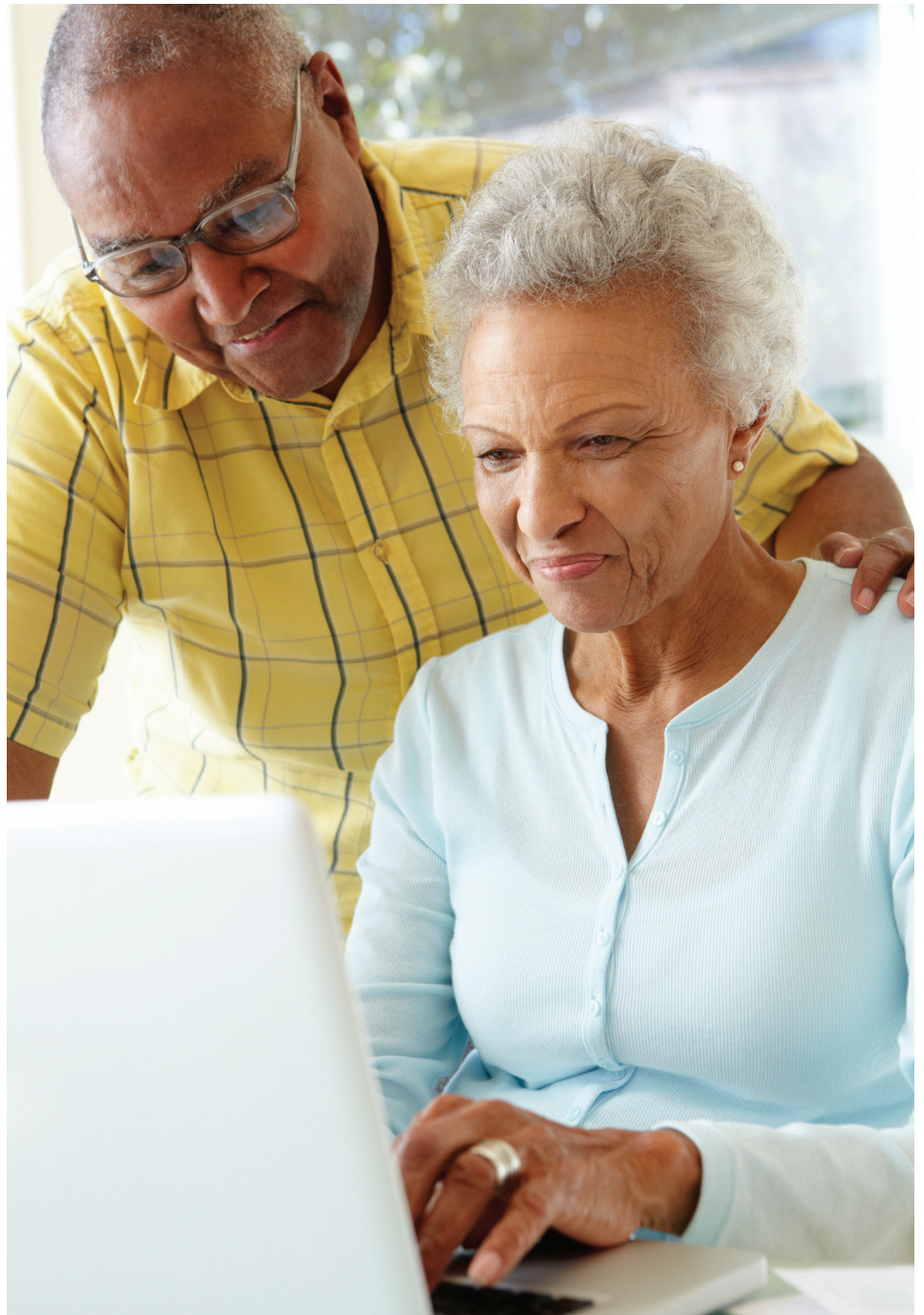
# Fraud Alert

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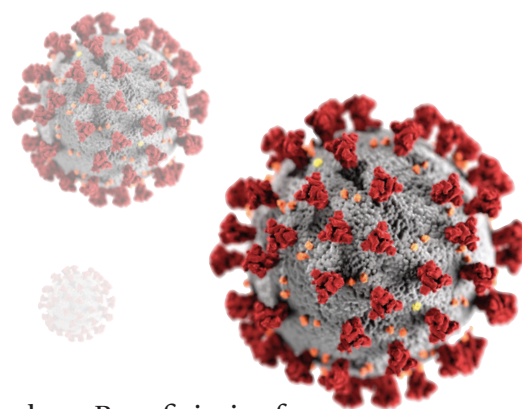
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General is alerting the public about fraud schemes related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Scammers are offering COVID-19 tests to Medicare beneficiaries in exchange for personal details, including Medicare information. However, the services are unapproved and illegitimate.

Fraudsters are targeting beneficiaries in a number of ways, including telemarketing calls, social media platforms and door-to-door visits.







These scammers use the coronavirus pandemic to benefit themselves. Beneficiaries face potential harms. The personal information collected can be used to fraudulently bill Federal health care programs and commit medical identity theft. If Medicare or Medicaid denies the claim for an unapproved test, the beneficiary could be responsible for the cost.

### Protect Yourself

- Beneficiaries should be cautious of unsolicited requests for their Medicare or Medicaid numbers.
- Be suspicious of any unexpected calls or visitors offering COVID-19 tests or supplies. If your personal information is compromised, it may be used in other fraud schemes.
- Ignore offers or advertisements for COVID-19 testing or treatments on social media sites.
- A physician or other trusted healthcare provider should assess your condition and approve any requests for COVID-19 testing.
- If you suspect COVID-19 fraud, contact National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline (866) 720-5721.

### References

Source Content: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, Page last updated March 23, 2020. [https://www.oig.hhs.gov/coronavirus/index.asp?utm\\_source=web&utm\\_medium=web&utm\\_campaign=covid19-landing-page&fbclid=IwAR11RZPOiEnb\\_Ak3HGRoaK8GdoUyg7h5OVmbQ\\_pO\\_87AgRwfNt4ST4duOqY](https://www.oig.hhs.gov/coronavirus/index.asp?utm_source=web&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=covid19-landing-page&fbclid=IwAR11RZPOiEnb_Ak3HGRoaK8GdoUyg7h5OVmbQ_pO_87AgRwfNt4ST4duOqY)

Image Credit: CDC/ Alissa Eckert, MS; Dan Higgins, MAMS ▲



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