

## How Older Adults can Stay Safe during COVID-19

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a new coronavirus. The virus spreads from close contact with the respiratory droplets of a person with COVID-19. These droplets occur when someone coughs, sneezes, talks and breathes. Droplets can travel more than two metres/six feet when a person sings, laughs or talks loudly. You may also get COVID-19 by touching surfaces that have the virus and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

In general, the risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age. [COVID-19 symptoms](#) may take up to 14 days to appear. Knowing the facts about COVID-19 can help reduce the spread of infection to you and the people around you. Refer to [COVID-19 information for seniors](#) to learn how you can reduce your risk.

For questions about COVID-19, call Toronto Public Health at **416-338-7600** (8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.).

### Staying safe during everyday activities

With increasing rates of COVID-19 in our community, plan ahead and limit non-essential trips. Use technology to shop online and connect with family and friends virtually.

- Continue with online banking, purchases, and curbside pickup, when possible.
- Stock up on essential supplies such as cleaning products, toiletries or pet food.
- Avoid crowded spaces and limit indoor contact with others.
- Call 211 for support from community agencies.
- Download the [COVID Alert app](#), which will notify you if you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

### Wear a mask

Wearing a mask or face covering helps prevent the spread of your respiratory droplets and germs to others. Masks are inexpensive, and can help save lives. The best mask is the one that fits [comfortably](#). Cloth masks can be reused with regular laundering.

### What to do if you have symptoms

If you have one or more [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, or you were in close contact with a person with COVID-19, you should [get tested](#). Make an appointment at an [assessment centre](#) near you. Stay home and self-isolate while you wait for your test result. OHIP coverage is not required for COVID-19 assessment or testing. **Do not visit a pharmacy if you have any symptoms of COVID-19.**

[Self-isolation](#) means staying at home because you may be infectious. Do not go out or use public transit. Shop online or call a friend to pick up supplies for you. Call your health care provider if you need help managing your symptoms. Call 911 if you are having difficulty breathing.

## Health care visits

Continue with your prescribed medication. Do not change treatment plans without talking with your health care provider. Do not delay visits to your health care provider if you have health concerns.

- Ask if they offer telephone or online services.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19:
  - Call ahead before visiting.
  - Do not take public transit. Drive or call a friend.
  - Use a face mask or covering, and keep six feet from others.
  - Call the office when you arrive, and wait outside or in your car until you are called.

## Staying connected

- Pick up the phone and call a family member, neighbour or friend.
- Limit social gatherings or participate virtually.
- Cancel plans and stay home when you are sick.
- Use video chats, emails, texting and other virtual tools to stay connected.
- Share selfies, recipes or an [e-card](#) to celebrate holidays and special occasions.
- Arrange for contactless delivery of treats and gifts for family and friends.
- Save hugs for people you live with.
- Keep a six foot distance from people you don't live with.
- Access free virtual and phone-based activities at [COVID-19: Stay, Play & Learn at Home](#). Search by 'Seniors' or 'Older Adults' to find many types of free virtual activities for seniors.

## Maintaining healthy habits

- Open windows for sunlight and air flow.
- Stay active. Go out for fresh air and exercise.
- Eat a variety of vegetables, fruit and whole grains. Don't skip meals.
- Drink more water, and reduce sugar intake.
- Limit your consumption of alcohol and other drugs.
- When feeling overwhelmed, reach out for help (see resources below).

## Reaching out for assistance

- Call 2-1-1 or the [Toronto Seniors Helpline](#) at 416-217-2077
- For online resources: [211 Ontario for older adults](#), [Toronto Seniors Services](#), and [mental health resources](#).

## Beware of Frauds and Scams

Do not purchase products with claims to protect you against COVID-19. There are no drugs approved for the prevention of COVID-19. Do not give your personal information to unsolicited callers. Toronto Public Health staff will never ask for your credit card or social insurance number.