
COVID-19 Update for the Nursing Home Worker

1. How Do I Protect Myself?

The number one way is to **wash your hands often** and per guidelines when at work! Please use gloves when indicated AND wash your hands after removing the gloves.

Wear a facemask. Do not touch the front of the facemask and remember to take it off carefully, laying the “dirty side” (the side facing outward) face down. If reusing a mask, store it in a paper bag—not plastic—to allow it to dry. If there are no facemasks available, the last option is to wear a homemade mask made of cloth. The masks are intended to help prevent you from transmitting the virus to residents. Most people with COVID-19 show symptoms 2-14 days after exposure, with generally healthy persons averaging 4-7 days before showing symptoms. During these 4-7 days you can still transmit the disease, and this is how COVID often enters a nursing home – by staff who do not show signs or symptoms.

It is extremely important that you practice social distancing. Limit your travel to work and home and nowhere else except briefly to the store for food and supplies. This is the BEST way to prevent spread in the community and entry into our homes!

2. Should I Come to Work?

Please yes **UNLESS** you are sick, on immunosuppressive drugs, or are unhealthy (which is unlikely if you are working in a nursing home). If you are sick, please call in and let us know the circumstances as you may need to be tested for COVID-19. If you are on immunosuppressive drugs or feel you are a high-risk individual, call and let us know your circumstances.

It is tempting to try to protect your family and take off work. Your residents need you now more than ever and taking off will hurt them and your co-workers. By protecting yourself with the right hygiene and equipment, and socially distancing yourself, you will be at a very low risk of getting COVID-19.

3. What Do I Do If I Was Possibly Exposed to COVID?

If you find out that a co-worker or patient at your facility has tested positive for COVID-19 you do NOT have to automatically self-quarantine or be tested right away, especially if you don't have symptoms. Notify your supervisor and monitor yourself for symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath). It is also a good idea to wear a mask/face cover for at least 14 days. Take your temperature several times a day if possible. Should you develop symptoms, stay at home and notify your supervisor as you may need testing at that point.

4. How Sick Will I Get If I Get COVID-19?

While COVID-19 is serious, younger and healthier people do much better than older, more frail persons. *If you are generally healthy*, you have about a third less risk than the numbers in the table below. *If you are unhealthy* (heart, lung, kidney, brain disease or on immune suppression drugs such as for cancer or rheumatoid arthritis), your risk is about a third higher than the numbers in the table below. **If you follow all COVID-19 precautions, these numbers are lower.** This is CDC data from February and March 2020 and may change.

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For every 100 persons who develops COVID-19, here is what happens:

<i>Age</i>	<i>Stays in Community</i>	<i>Hospitalized</i>	<i>ICU admit</i>	<i>Dies</i>	<i>Recovers</i>
Less than 20	96	4	0	0	100
20-44	82	18	3	0.2	99.8
45-54	76	24	8	0.6	99.4
55-64	75	25	8	2	98
65-74	64	36	13	4	96
75-84	55	45	21	7	93
85 and older	49	51	18	19	81
All ages	74	26	8	3	97

Most hospitalizations in younger people are brief and do not result in life-threatening disease. Complications from COVID-19 really start rising above the age of 65. Almost all persons above 85 who enter the ICU die. Almost all younger patients fully recuperate.

Key take-home lessons:

- Despite being a very serious disease in older age, the vast majority of COVID-19 infected persons recover, especially when they are healthy.
- Social isolation, hand washing, right use of PPE and responsible work habits will protect you and your residents. Your work is much appreciated and needed!