



Department for
the Aging

How to help your neighbor: Keeping older New Yorkers safe from COVID-19

There is widespread community transmission of COVID-19. This means COVID-19 is circulating in the community and that we all should act as though we are exposed. The symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, shortness of breath, and sore throat. People 50 years of age or older and people who have other health conditions, including lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, kidney disease, liver disease, cancer, or a weakened immune system, are most at risk for severe COVID-19 illness.

Together we can slow the spread and protect those at higher risk of severe illness and our health care workers from getting sick. See below for what to do, and what not to do, to help older New Yorkers stay safe.

For the latest information and guidance on COVID-19, visit the NYC Health Department website: www.nyc.gov/health/coronavirus. For real-time updates, text "COVID" to 692-692. Message and data rates may apply.

✓ DO take steps to protect yourself and others from COVID-19

- Stay home. All New Yorkers — healthy or sick — need to stay home. **This is especially important for people 50 years of age or older or people with any of the chronic health conditions listed above.** You should only leave your home for essential tasks, such as work (if you are an [essential worker](#)) getting groceries and supplies, or essential medical care.
- As of April 17, people in New York must wear face coverings in public places, particularly where they cannot keep six feet away from others, in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order 202.17. A face covering is any well-secured paper or cloth (like a bandana or scarf) that covers your nose and mouth. It is essential that everyone continue to practice physical distancing and healthy hand hygiene even when wearing a face covering — including keeping 6 feet of distance between yourself and others whenever possible. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and look for "[FAQ About Face Coverings](#)."
- Closely monitor your health for fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat or other cold or flu-like symptoms.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If you are unable to wash your hands, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when sneezing or coughing. Do not use your hands.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Do not shake hands. Instead, wave.
- Maintain **6 feet of distance** between yourself and others.
- Avoid all nonessential travel and interactions.

✓ DO call older New Yorkers including family, friends, and neighbors.

- Ask them over the phone or over a video call what medications they are taking and see if you can help them maintain an extra supply on hand.
- Monitor their food and other medical supplies needs (oxygen, incontinence, dialysis, wound care) and create a back-up plan.
- Ask them if they have stocked up on non-perishable food items and ensure they have a sufficient supply on hand to minimize trips to stores.

- Ask about the health of the other residents they cohabitate with and know [what to do if someone gets sick](#).
- If you are picking up groceries for a friend or neighbor who cannot leave their home, minimize contact and wear a face covering. If you need to enter their residence, see below for extra precautions you should take. Physical distancing is critical to keeping each other safe. Drop off meals outside a neighbor's door rather than handing it off face-to-face and remind them to wash their hands after they bring the meal inside, as well as before eating.
- Call frequently and regularly to check in on them and try to video-call if possible – maintaining human connection is important for people's mental health, especially during stressful times.

✗ DO NOT visit older New Yorkers, especially if they are sick or have underlying health conditions, unless absolutely necessary.

- Physical distancing is key to slowing the spread of COVID-19, particularly among older and vulnerable New Yorkers.
- It is possible to have COVID-19 and have only mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.
- If you need to visit an older adult for physical assistance or something else that cannot be done remotely, only do so if you are not sick. Be sure to wear a face covering, practice healthy hand hygiene before and after interacting with them, cough or sneeze into your arm or a tissue, and keep at least six feet of distance between you and them.
- Take your temperature before visiting to make sure you do not have a fever. If you have a fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, or any other cold or flu-like symptoms, do not go to check on them. See if someone else can assist or call 311 to request a welfare check.

✓ DO ensure older New Yorkers in your life are doing what they can to prevent falls and injuries in their home, including:

- **Taking steps to improve the safety of their home.** If they are able, ask them to:
 - Remove objects from the floor; fix loose or torn carpet; secure throw rugs to the ground with rug tape; and coil electrical wires next to the wall and secure them.
 - Use a step stool with a handrail to access hard-to-reach items. It is unsafe to stand on furniture.
 - Replace burned out light bulbs as soon as possible; place night lights along dark corridors; and reduce glare by adding curtains or shades to windows. Place a lamp within reach of the bed, so that if needed they can turn it on at night while reclining and let their eyes adjust.
 - If small repairs are urgently needed in their home, talk to their super and building management or call their local hardware store and ask about contactless delivery options.
 - Refer to the [NYC Home Safety Checklist](#) for additional ideas for protecting your home from falls hazards.
- **Encouraging them to keep their feet pain-free and healthy by:**
 - Wearing comfortable shoes that fit well, event at home. Avoid typical house slippers with flimsy soles and backless shoes like flip flops. Try to avoid walking around the home in socks or stockings, as they can be slippery, and limit time walking barefoot. If you must wear socks or stockings, try to find versions with grips on the bottom.
 - Keeping feet clean and dry (especially between toes), trimming toenails regularly, and calling a doctor for any foot problems or difficulty cutting nails.
- **Continuing to take their medications**
 - It is important to continue taking all their prescriptions and over-the-counter medications. Pharmacies remain open and many are offering free delivery. Encourage or help them to call their pharmacist to discuss refills and possible delivery options. Encourage or help them to call 311 if they need help connecting with a pharmacist.

✓ **DO make sure older New Yorkers in your life know of other resources**

- If someone is feeling lonely or isolated, refer them to NYC Well which is the City's resource to free, confidential mental health support. NYC Well staff are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and can provide brief counseling and referrals to care in over 200 languages. For support, call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173, or visit nyc.gov/nycwell to chat online.
- If someone needs multilingual assistance, connections to meals, or other resources, have them call 311.
- Older New Yorkers experiencing domestic and gender-based violence need to know that supportive services are still available and easy to access. Elder abuse can be financial, physical, emotional, and include neglect. Call 311 for more information on DFTA's elder abuse program. For domestic and gender-based violence survivors, please visit nyc.gov/nychope or call NYC's 24-hour hotline 1-800-621-4673. For any emergencies, please call 911.
- Sign up to be notified of future volunteer opportunities at nyc.gov/helpnow