

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

There is widespread community transmission of COVID-19. This means it is spreading freely in the community and that we all need to act as though we are exposed. The symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat. People over 50 years of age or older or people who have other health conditions, including chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, 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: nyc.gov/coronavirus.

✓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 who have other health conditions, including chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system.** You should only leave your home for essential tasks, such as work (if you cannot work from home), getting groceries and supplies or essential medical care. Or, as an alternative, use delivery services.
- 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.
- Keep at least **six feet** between yourself and others, whenever possible.
- 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 the protocol if someone gets sick.
- If you are picking up groceries for a friend or neighbor who cannot leave their home, minimize any contact. If you need to enter their residence, see below for extra precautions you should take. Social distancing is critical to keeping each other safe. Try and 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 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: Practice social and physical distancing

- Social and physical distancing are key in order to prevent the continued spread of COVID-19, particularly among older and vulnerable New Yorkers.
- If you have to visit an older person for physical assistance or something else that cannot be done remotely, be sure to wash your hands thoroughly before interacting with them and keep a distance of at least six feet.
- Take your temperature before visiting to make sure you don’t 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 see if they can perform a welfare check.

✓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. 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.
- Sign up to be notified of future volunteer opportunities at nyc.gov/helpnownyc

✗DO NOT: Visit older New Yorkers, especially if they are sick or have underlying health conditions.

- 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, practice good hand hygiene, be sure to cough or sneeze into your arm or a tissue, and keep at least six feet of distance between you and them whenever possible. As an extra precaution, take your temperature before going and do not go if you have an elevated temperature or feel sick.