

NIA Advice for Older Canadians during COVID-19

According to the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) (PHAC), older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for developing more severe complications from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19, which means the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Here are some actions that you can take to help protect your health and those you love.

What You Can Do

- **Listen to and follow the directions of your provincial/territorial and municipal authorities.** Check your provincial/territorial and regional websites for announcements, timelines, closures and local information on COVID-19 and how it's affecting your community.
- **Stay home, but stay connected.** Stay home as much as possible, but connect with your family, friends and neighbors by phone and video calls, email, texts or social media.
- **Create a personal support network** of trusted individuals who can help set-up your phone, computer or tablet and check in with you by phone or video calls, text or email to ensure your wellness. They can also help you with errands, groceries, online shopping and setting up telemedicine (i.e., medical appointments over the phone or by video). Share your important health and medical information with them and be sure they know how they can help you.
- **Practice social (physical) distancing.** Avoid non-essential outings in your community. Avoid group settings and gatherings of more than 10 people. Keep 6 feet or 2 meters between you and others while in public and avoid close contact with people who do not share your home. As physical distancing is not always possible with others, the wearing a cloth mask could help you prevent passing COVID-19 to others, in case you may be infected and not know it yet.
- **Limit visits with family members, especially young children.** While you may need family members to help run errands, keep about 6 feet or 2 meters away from them. Visitors should leave food or grocery items at the door rather than entering the home. Avoid inviting young children into the home because it is difficult for them to effectively practice and understand the importance of physical distancing.
- **Take everyday steps to stay healthy.**
 - **Clean your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If unavailable, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or do so into your elbow. Throw away used tissues in a lined trash can. Immediately wash your hands.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
 - Clean and disinfect household surfaces daily and frequently touched surfaces throughout the day. Learn more about [cleaning and disinfecting from Health Canada](#).

- **Have a 1-month supply of medications and a 2-week supply of food to avoid frequent shopping trips and limit your potential exposure to the virus.**
 - A 1-month supply of prescription medication includes over-the-counter medications like cough suppressants and fever reducing drugs. Ask your physician or local pharmacy if prescriptions can be delivered.
 - A 2-week supply of food also includes water, household cleaning supplies, personal hygiene items, and medical supplies or equipment. Contact your local grocery stores to see if they offer online ordering and home delivery. Find out if there are local nonprofit services to assist with food or meal delivery.
- **Have a plan for if you get sick.** Make a list of medications and medical contacts, and know where to find health care documents like advance directives (a living will). If you do not have a living will, consider contacting your health care provider to discuss it and then work with your lawyer to create one. Determine who will care for you at home should you become ill, and tell them what sort of care you would want if you became too ill and unable to speak for yourself.
- **Cancel all non-essential, in-person doctor’s appointments.** Use telemedicine services, which enables you to communicate with your doctor over video, phone or email, rather than face-to-face. A friend or family member may be able to help you arrange this. Know the COVID-19 symptoms and additional steps you may be able to take to protect yourself; see <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/about-coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>
- **Beware of scams.** Unfortunately, scammers are taking advantage of people’s fears and the [Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre](#) and [Google](#) has tips to help protect you and others. There currently are no vaccines, pills, lotions or other prescription or over-the-counter products available to treat or cure COVID-19 online or in stores. Beware of “viral videos” suggesting potentially dangerous or toxic home preventatives, such as drinking excessive amounts of water or mouthwash. Report fraud to the [Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre](#).

Coping with Stress

Fear and anxiety about the COVID-19 pandemic can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions. Please see <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19> for information on coping with stress.

Additional Resources

- Government of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>
- Canadian Red Cross: <https://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/current-emergency-responses/covid-19-%E2%80%93-novel-coronavirus>
- Self-Assessment Tools: <https://www.nia-ryerson.ca/self-assessment-tools-across-canada>
- Financial Support for Canadians: <https://www.nia-ryerson.ca/financial-support-for-canadians-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

- Find a food bank near you: <https://www.foodbanksCanada.ca/utility-pages/find-a-food-bank.aspx>
- If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions such as sadness, depression, anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or someone else, call 911 or find a [Crisis Centre](#) near you: <https://suicideprevention.ca/need-help/>