

# Patient Education

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## **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Discharge Instructions**

You must carefully read the "Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer" below in order to understand and correctly use this information

### **About this topic**

Coronavirus disease 2019 is also known as COVID-19. It is a viral illness that infects the lungs. It is caused by a virus called SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2).

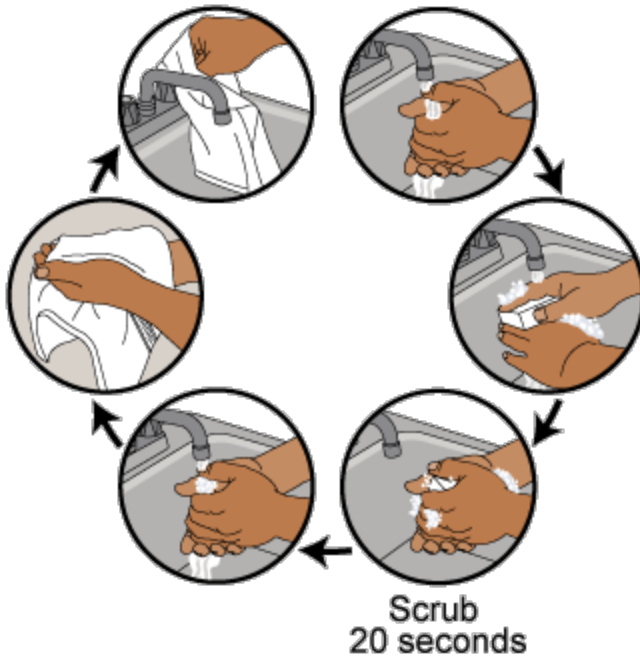
The signs of COVID-19 are like the flu, but can be much more serious. You may have a cough, fever, shaking chills and it may be hard to breathe. You may be very tired, have muscle aches, a headache, or sore throat. Some people have an upset stomach or loose stools. Others lose their sense of smell or taste. You may not have these signs all the time and they may come and go while you are sick.

The virus spreads easily through droplets when you sneeze or cough. The germs also survive on surfaces like tables, door handles, and telephones. This means that others can become sick if they touch a surface with the virus and then touch their face. Doctors believe you can also spread the infection even if you don't have any symptoms, but they do not know how that happens.

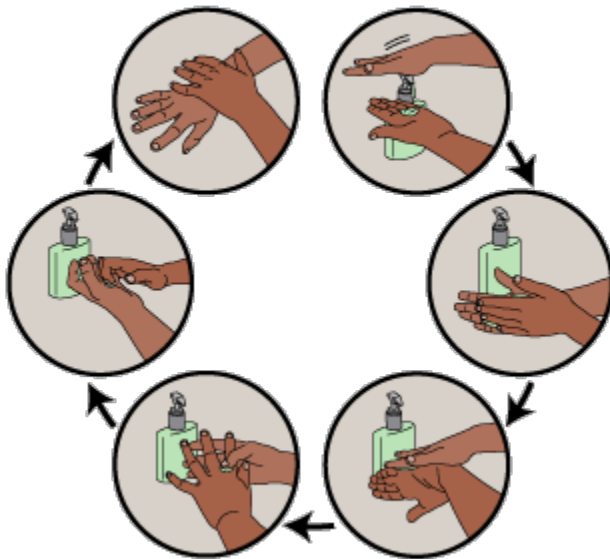
Some people have a mild case of COVID-19 and are able to stay at home until they feel better. Others may need to be in the hospital if they are very sick. People with COVID-19 must isolate themselves. You can start to be around others when your doctor says it is safe to do so.

### **Image(s)**

## Hand Washing



## Hand Sanitizing



### What care is needed at home?

- Ask your doctor what you need to do when you go home. Make sure you ask questions if you do not understand what the doctor says.
- Drink lots of water, juice, or broth to replace fluids lost from a fever.

- You may use cool mist humidifiers to help ease congestion and coughing.
- Use 2 to 3 pillows to prop yourself up when you lie down to make it easier to breathe and sleep.
- Do not smoke and do not drink beer, wine, and mixed drinks (alcohol).
- To lower the chance of passing the infection to others:
  - **Wear a mask if you are around others** who are not sick.
  - Wash your hands often.
  - Stay home in a separate room, away from others. Only go out to get medical care.
  - Use a separate bathroom if possible.
  - Do not make food for others.

#### **What follow-up care is needed?**

- Your doctor may ask you to make visits to the office to check on your progress. Be sure to keep these visits. Make sure you wear a mask at these visits.
- If you can, tell the staff you have COVID-19 ahead of time so they can take extra care to stop the disease from spreading.
- It may take a few weeks before your health returns to normal.

#### **What drugs may be needed?**

The doctor may order drugs to:

- Help with breathing
- Help with fever
- Help with swelling in your airways and lungs
- Control coughing
- Ease a sore throat
- Help a runny or stuffy nose

#### **Will physical activity be limited?**

You may have to limit your physical activity. Talk to your doctor about the right amount of activity for you. If you have been very sick with COVID-19, it can take some time to get your strength back.

#### **Will there be any other care needed?**

Doctors do not know how long you can pass the virus on to others after you are sick. This is why it is important to stay in a separate room when you are sick. For now, doctors are giving general guidelines for you to follow after you have been sick. Before you go around other people, you should:

- Be fever free for 3 days without taking any drugs to lower your fever
- Have no symptoms of cough or shortness of breath
- Wait at least 7 days after you first have symptoms or your first positive test, but you need to be symptom-free as above.

Sometimes doctors will also want you have 2 negative tests for COVID-19 at least 1 day apart. Doctors also do not know if you will be able to catch this virus again.

### **What problems could happen?**

- Fluid loss. This is dehydration.
- Short-term or long-term lung damage
- Heart problems
- Death

### **What can be done to prevent this health problem?**

- Wear a cloth mask or face cover:
  - When you leave your house. It is best to stay home as much as you can. Only go out for food or medicine.
  - If you are sick with COVID-19 and must be in the same room with other people. It is best to stay in a room away from others when you have COVID-19.
  - When you take care of someone in your home with COVID-19. You may also want to wear gloves.
  - If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and are around other people. It is best to stay in a room away from others.
  - If you are at high risk for COVID-19 and are around other people.
- Wash your hands as soon as you take your cloth mask or face cover off. Take care not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when you take off your mask.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol also work to kill the virus. Rub your hands with the sanitizer for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid crowds. Try to stay home as much as you can. If you do need to be in a group of other people wash your hands often. Try to stay at least 6 feet (1.8 meters) apart. Avoid handshakes, hugs, and high fives. Avoid touching your face.
- City and state leaders may limit how many people can gather together. You may be asked to stay home and it is important to follow this information as best you can.

- If you must travel, check for alerts on what countries and places are affected by COVID-19 and stay away from those areas.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. You can also cough into your elbow. Throw away tissues in the trash and wash your hands after touching used tissues.
- Avoid touching your own face with your hands, especially around your nose and mouth.
- Wipe down often touched objects and surfaces with a household cleaning wipe or spray. Check the label to make sure it works to kill viruses.
- Wear a gown, face mask, and gloves if you will come in contact with blood, mucus, or other body fluids from someone who has COVID-19. This includes being around a person with COVID-19 as germs can be passed when they speak or cough.

#### **When do I need to call the doctor?**

- Signs of infection. These include a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, chills, cough, more sputum, or change in color of sputum.
- Breathing is getting worse - harder or faster than before or you feel like you are getting less air
- Trouble breathing while lying down flat on your back
- You need to lean forward to help you breathe when sitting
- Fingertips, fingernails, skin, or lips are blue

#### **Teach Back: Helping You Understand**

The Teach Back Method helps you understand the information we are giving you. After you talk with the staff, tell them in your own words what you learned. This helps to make sure the staff has described each thing clearly. It also helps to explain things that may have been confusing. Before going home, make sure you can do these:

- I can tell you about my condition.
- I can tell you what may help ease my breathing.
- I can tell you what I can do to help avoid passing the infection to others.
- I can tell you what I will do if I have trouble breathing; feel sleepy or confused; or my fingertips, fingernails, skin, or lips are blue.

#### **Where can I learn more?**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>

World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

**Last Reviewed Date**

2020-04-28

**Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer:**

This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from your health care provider. This is only a brief summary of general information. It does NOT include all information about conditions, illnesses, injuries, tests, procedures, treatments, therapies, discharge instructions or life-style choices that may apply to you. You must talk with your health care provider for complete information about your health and treatment options. This information should not be used to decide whether or not to accept your health care provider's advice, instructions or recommendations. Only your health care provider has the knowledge and training to provide advice that is right for you.

Last Updated 4/29/20