

COVID-19 Coronavirus Disease

GUIDANCE FOR HOME CARE PROVIDERS IN BERMUDA

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If you have the responsibility of caring for persons in their own homes, there are several actions you need to take immediately to protect yourself and those you care for, to lower the risk of contracting COVID-19.

These include:

- Practicing safe, effective hygiene for the protection of your client and yourself.
- Staying at home if you are sick.
- Preparing a plan for back up care providers for times when you are ill.

The general strategies that the United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Bermuda's Ministry of Health recommend to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are the same strategies used in home care every day to detect and prevent the spread of other respiratory viruses like influenza.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently-discovered coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Who is Most at Risk?

Seniors, healthcare workers and persons with chronic medical conditions like heart, lung or kidney disease, diabetes or frailty are at higher risk for illness from COVID-19 disease. It is important for you to take action to reduce the risk for you and your clients. Seniors and persons requiring home-based care are a wide ranging group, with some being relatively healthy, others being frail and elderly, and some in between. Generally, as people age, they're more likely to have a health condition, as well as develop general frailty that can lead to complications from COVID-19.

What Can I Do To Protect Myself And My Client?

1. BE PREPARED

- Review your list of clients; that includes names, addresses and contact information to ensure that it is up to date, including levels of informal support available to individuals. You should be prepared to share this information if required with other caregivers or the Department of Health, if requested.
- Work with care recipients and their families to develop an acceptable plan of action to cover any caregiving that the person may require if you (their usual caregiver) are unavailable.

That Plan should include:

- Who, when and how the family /care recipient is notified of absence.
- Name and contact information of an alternate registered caregiver and an opportunity for the care recipient/family to meet or chat with that individual in advance, as well as review the plan of care to be provided.
- Expected hours and days for the caregiver.
- Expected duties or tasks.
- Consider arrangements to support sharing of the care tasks between home care providers, and with family members of care recipient, if available.
- Network with other home care providers to determine what care services are available to meet the needs of your client(s).
- Determine if volunteers such as neighbors or church members may offer social and emotional support with phone or video calls.

2. PRACTICE SAFE AND EFFECTIVE PERSONAL HYGIENE

- Thoroughly wash your hands in soapy water for 20 seconds on arrival and just before departure to each person's home you may be caring for.
- Wash your hands often and before preparing food, after using the toilet, or after handling soiled linens or tissues.
- If soap and water are not available then use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- Cover sneezes or coughs with your sleeve or tissue. Dispose of soiled tissues in a plastic trash bag.
- Put distance between yourself and other people. This is especially important for the person you may be caring for, as older persons or those with chronic health conditions may be at higher risk.
- Gloves and aprons should be worn when providing close personal hygiene such as bed baths, changing of incontinence wear, and for handling bodily fluids. Consider reusable aprons that may be laundered. Gloves should not be reused.
- Masks are not necessary when caring for persons without respiratory symptoms of acute illness.

3. FOLLOW HOME HYGIENE ADVICE

- Frequently touched surfaces such as counters, tables, handles or door knobs, remote controls should be cleaned regularly. Usual household products, such as detergents and bleach can be used as these will be very effective at getting rid of the virus on surfaces.
- Increase ventilation in the home when appropriate by opening windows or doors.
- Personal waste (for example, used tissues, continence pads and other items soiled with bodily fluids) and disposable cleaning cloths can be stored securely within disposable rubbish bags. These bags should be placed into another bag, tied securely and kept separate from other waste within your own room. This should be put aside for at least 72 hours before being put in the usual household waste bin for disposal as normal.
- Do not shake dirty laundry.
- Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an ill person can be washed with other people's items.
- Items heavily soiled with body fluids, for example, vomit or diarrhea, or items that cannot be washed, should be disposed of, with the owner's consent.

What are the signs and symptoms of COVID-19?

- Most common are fever, tiredness, and dry cough.
- Some persons may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea.
- Symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually.
- Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell.
- Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment.
- Around 1 out of every 6 people who gets COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing.

What To Do If You Have Symptoms Of COVID-19

- Stay home and, as much as possible, stay isolated from other household members, including using a separate bathroom if this is an option. Avoid public transportation, social gatherings, work, school, public places.
- Call your doctor.
- Home care workers, like other health care workers, should stay home for as long as advised by a GP or Public Health.
- Keep yourself away from other people as much as possible.
- Cover your sneezes and coughs with tissues or your sleeve.
- Avoid sharing household items such as dishes, drinking glasses, eating utensils, towels or bedding with others or pets in your home.

What To Do If Your Care Recipient Shows Symptoms

- Notify family members and be certain one of you calls the client's GP.
- Aprons, gloves and fluid repellent surgical masks should be used in these situations. If there is a risk of splashing, then eye protection will minimize risk.

If neither the care worker nor the individual receiving care is symptomatic, then no personal protective equipment is required above and beyond normal good hygiene practices.

Stay informed with the facts from reliable sources-

- coronavirus.gov.bm
- www.CDC.gov
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

