

LIVING IN OR VISITING

Retirement Communities or Independent Living Facilities

Retirement communities and independent living facilities are residential or shared housing communities that are usually age-restricted (e.g., aged 55 and older) with residents who are partially or fully retired and can generally care for themselves without regular nursing or other routine medical assistance.

Many people living in retirement communities and independent living facilities are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 because:

- Risk increased with age, and/or
- They may have underlying health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, or lung disease.

They also may be at higher risk of getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 because of retirement community and independent living facility characteristics, such as frequent social activities, dining facilities and communal spaces, community activities, and shared transportation. Residents of and visitors to retirement communities and independent living facilities can take everyday preventive actions to help keep their communities safe.

What residents can do:

Protect yourself and others

- Social distance by staying at least 6 feet apart from others that you do not live with.
- Seek out a “buddy” in the facility who will check on you and make sure you are getting basic necessities, including food and household essentials.
- Practice additional actions everyone should take to protect themselves.

Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others

- You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick.
- Wear a cloth face cover in any shared spaces. For example, in activity rooms, lounges, when someone is in your residence, or when going out in public (e.g., when going to the grocery store or to pick up other necessities).
 - However, cloth face coverings should not be placed on anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance, or young children under age 2.
 - They also should not be placed on young children – those under age 2.
- The cloth face cover is meant to protect other people in case you are infected.
- Continue to keep at least 6 feet between yourself and others. The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.

Wash your hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place/common area, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- To the extent possible, avoid touching frequently touched surfaces in public places (e.g., elevator buttons, door handles, handicap door access switches, handrails)
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily and as needed. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- If surfaces are dirty, clean them. Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- Then, use a household disinfectant. Most common EPA-registered household disinfectants external will work.

Having visitors

- Limit visitors to people who are essential to maintaining your health, well-being, and safety. Social interaction is important; however, in-person social interactions are associated with increased risk of infection.
- Encourage visitors to use cloth face covers and to follow social distancing recommendations by staying at least 6 feet apart (about 2 arm's lengths) from others that you do not live with..
- Avoid group transportation when possible. If not possible, follow CDC's transportation guidance.
- Avoid having staff enter your room or living quarters unless it is necessary. Use virtual communications and check ins (phone or video chat), as appropriate.

Protect yourself in common spaces

- Minimize use of common spaces (e.g., mail rooms, dining areas) if you are not able to maintain social distance from other people (at least 6 feet apart).
- Avoid going into small enclosed areas, like stairwells and elevators, if there are other people. Consider going one at a time.
- Use laundry facilities during off-peak times where you can be at least 6 feet away from others.
- Avoid placing your toothbrush directly on shared counter surfaces. Totes can be used for personal items so they do not touch the bathroom countertop.
- Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, or eating utensils.

Ensure your regular care and medical services continue

- Keep up-to-date lists of medical conditions and medications, and periodically check to ensure you have a sufficient supply of your prescription and over-the-counter medications. Mail-order medications could also be considered.
- Contact your healthcare provider to ask about getting extra necessary medications to have on hand for a longer period of time, or to consider using a mail-order option for medications.
- Work with your primary caretakers to identify alternative caretakers to ensure continuity of care should there be any interruptions to the regular services you receive.

- Work with your medical providers to determine if any elective procedures or non-emergent services can be delayed without negatively impacting your health.
- Consider telemedicine services when available. Ask your medical providers if they have a formal “telehealth” system for their regular appointments and, if not, ask if you can still communicate by telephone (instead of visits) to reduce the number of face-to-face interactions.
- Be aware of COVID-19 symptoms and know who to ask for help or when to call 911.

Know where to get information

- Make sure you to read the community COVID-19 information sitributed to you. This may include receiving information through email, websites, hotlines, automated text messaging, newsletters, or flyers.

Prepare

- Ensure that you have an adequate supply of food and everyday essentials in your home should a disruption occur for an extended period.
- Seek out a “buddy” in the community or facility who will check on you and make sure you are getting basic necessities, including food and household essentials.

Manage stress and coping

- Learn and practice alternative ways to interact, including replacing in-person group interactions with video or telephone calls. Examples include:
 - Frequent video chats, emails, text messages, and phone calls.
 - Recorded video messages to share via email or text message, if live-video chatting is not feasible.
 - Cards and letters to friends and family members.
- Learn more about managing stress and anxiety during COVID-19.

Caring for yourself and protecting others if you have COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19

- If you are an older adult, 65 years and older, with a fever or other symptoms and want to get tested, call your healthcare provider first. You can also visit your state or local health department’s website to look for the latest local information on testing.
- Symptoms of COVID-19 can range from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. Symptoms may appear 2–14 days after exposure. Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms (chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea). These symptoms might not be the same in every person.
 - In some cases, fever or other symptoms can take longer to develop in older adults and people of any age with underlying health conditions.
 - In older adults, normal body temperature can be lower than in younger adults (closer to 97°F than 98.6°F). Fever temperatures can be lower in older adults.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or have tested positive, stay home and self-isolate:
 - Follow CDC’s guidance on what to do if you are sick
 - If someone is caring for you, the person should follow CDC’s guidance on caring for someone sick at home.
- If you have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, stay home and quarantine.

What volunteers and visitors can do:

Know the current community policies for volunteers and visitors.

- Avoid entering the facility, the premises, or private residences unless your presence is essential to preserving the health, including mental health, well-being, and safety of residents. Support residents through:
- Frequent video chats, emails, text messages, and phone calls.
- Recorded video messages to share via email or text message, especially if live-video chatting is not feasible.
- Cards and letters with messages of support and updates on family members.

Follow personal protective measures and the recommendations set forth by the community or facility you are visiting.

Do not visit if you recently (within the past 14 days) had contact with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19 or have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Most importantly, do not enter the retirement community or independent living facility if you are sick.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially before and after you have been inside a residence or public place/common area, interacting with a resident, , or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.

Maintain social distance of at least 6 feet from others whenever possible. Avoid contact with persons who have symptoms of COVID-19, have tested positive for COVID-19, or who have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19.

Wear cloth face coverings in any shared spaces. You could spread the virus that causes COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick. The cloth face cover is meant to protect other people in case you are infected. Continue to keep at least 6 feet between yourself and others. The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing. Note: Cloth face coverings should **not** be placed on:

- Babies and children younger than 2 years old
- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious
- Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance

Watch for symptoms of illness and follow the recommended steps if you get sick. If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 while at the retirement community or independent living facility, immediately put on a cloth face covering, leave, self-isolate, and notify the residents you visited and administrators. If you were there with a volunteer organization, notify the organization. Learn more about additional guidance on what you can do if you get sick.