

## CARING FOR PEOPLE WITH COVID-19 AT HOME

*This material is adapted from WHO's guidelines. The full WHO guidance can found [here](#).*

Ideally, health care workers should assess whether suitable care and isolation can be provided at home and teach the family how to care for the person. Ideally, there should also be an active link between a health care worker and the family so that advice can be given, and if the patient gets worse, then additional help or referral to hospital can be organized.

It is very important to stop the infection spreading to others in the household.

Follow these basic guidelines as closely as possible:

- Put the patient in a single room with open windows and an open door.
- The person should stay in the room away from other members of the family.
- Make sure that shared spaces (e.g. kitchen, bathroom) are well aired (keep windows open).
- Household members should stay in a different room or, if that is not possible, keep a distance of at least 1 metre from the ill person (e.g. sleep in a separate bed).
- Limit the number of caregivers. Ideally, one person who is in good health and has no underlying medical conditions should care for the person.
- Visitors should not be allowed until the patient has completely recovered and has no signs or symptoms of COVID-19.
- Carry out hand hygiene after any type of contact with patients or things in the room.  
**Throughout this guidance, “hand hygiene” means washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water or using a hand sanitizer.<sup>1</sup>**
- Hand hygiene should be done before and after preparing food, before eating, after using the toilet, and whenever hands look dirty.
  - If hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand rub can be used.
  - For visibly dirty hands, use soap and water.
  - When washing hands with soap and water, it is preferable to use disposable paper towels to dry hands. If these are not available, use clean cloth towels and replace them frequently.
- To stop the spread of air and water/spit/saliva from the mouth and lungs, the patient should be given a medical mask and wear it as much as possible and change it daily.
- If a medical mask is not available or too hard for the patient to wear, then everyone should be very careful that water/spit/saliva and cough from their mouth and nose do not reach others in the family.
- Everyone should cover their nose and mouth with a paper tissue or handkerchief when coughing or sneezing, or cough into their bent elbow. Tissues should be thrown away immediately; cloths should be cleaned properly after use (e.g. wash handkerchiefs using regular soap or detergent and water).
- Caregivers should also wear a medical mask that covers their mouth and nose when in the same room as the patient.
- Masks should not be touched or handled during use. If the mask gets wet or dirty from secretions, it must be replaced immediately with a new clean, dry mask.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

- Remove the mask very carefully – that means do not touch the front, but instead untie the strings and remove it. Throw the mask away immediately after use and perform hand hygiene.
- Avoid direct contact with other body fluids, particularly from the mouth, nose or lungs (water/spit/saliva/cough), and stool (poo). Use disposable gloves and a mask when providing mouth care and when emptying urine, poo and other bodily waste. Perform hand hygiene before and after removing gloves and the mask.
- Do not reuse masks or gloves.
- Do not mix things used for the patient with things used for others in the house: e.g. keep bed sheets, towels, plate, cup, knife and fork and other eating things just for the patient. These things should be cleaned with soap and water after use and may be re-used by the patient instead of being thrown away.
- Daily, clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched in the room where the patient is being cared for, such as bedside tables, bedframes, light switches and other bedroom furniture. Regular household soap or detergent should be used first for cleaning, and then, after rinsing, regular household disinfectant containing 0.1% sodium hypochlorite <sup>2</sup> (i.e. equivalent to 1000 ppm) should be used.
- Clean and disinfect bathroom and toilet surfaces at least once daily. Regular household soap or detergent should be used first for cleaning, and then, after rinsing, regular household disinfectant containing 0.1% sodium hypochlorite should be used.
- Clean the patient’s clothes, bed linen, and bath and hand towels using regular laundry soap and water or machine wash at 60–90 °C (140–194 °F) with common household detergent, and dry well. Place used linen into a laundry bag. Do not shake laundry and avoid used materials coming into contact with skin and clothes.
- Gloves and protective clothing (e.g. plastic aprons) should be used when cleaning surfaces or handling clothing or linen soiled with body fluids. Depending on the context, either utility or single-use gloves can be used. After use, utility gloves should be cleaned with soap and water and decontaminated with 0.1% sodium hypochlorite solution; single-use gloves (e.g. nitrile or latex) should be thrown away. Perform hand hygiene before putting on and after removing gloves.
- Gloves, masks, and other waste generated during home care should be placed into a waste bin with a lid in the patient’s room before disposing of it as infectious waste (refer to national guidelines on how to dispose of this waste).
- Do not share or touch other things the patient has used e.g. toothbrushes, cigarettes, eating utensils, dishes, drinks, towels, washcloths, or bed linen.
- When health care workers provide home care, they should perform a risk assessment to select the appropriate personal protective equipment and follow the recommendations for droplet and contact precautions.

<sup>2</sup> The following table outlines how to prepare a **1 litre 0.1% hypochlorite** solution:

Original strength of bleach (% sodium hypochlorite)	Bleach (ml)	Water (ml)	Total (ml)
1%	100	900	1000
2%	50	950	1000
3%	33	967	1000
4%	25	975	1000
5%	20	980	1000