FACT SHEET

NEW CORONAVIRUS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS
Information correct on: 15.05.2020

The new coronavirus is dangerous for people aged 65 and over and those with certain underlying conditions. Are you looking after vulnerable people or living with them in the same household? In this fact sheet you will find information you should be aware of as a family caregiver and which may provide you with answers to important questions.

Protect yourself and the person you are caring for. Your job is particularly important at this time. Here you will find information about what to do on a day-to-day basis or when symptoms of the disease appear. You should also prepare for a situation where you yourself become ill by drawing up a list of information – preferably with the person you’re caring for – that will be helpful for someone who has to take your place as carer.

People with one of the following underlying conditions are particularly vulnerable:

- high blood pressure
- chronic respiratory conditions
- diabetes
- conditions and therapies that weaken the immune system
- cardiovascular disease
- cancer

What should you make sure to do on a day-to-day basis if you live in the same household as the person you are caring for?

You can leave your home as long as you strictly follow the hygiene and social distancing rules.

Avoid places frequented by large numbers of people (e.g. railway stations, public transport) and peak times (e.g. shopping on Saturdays, commuting).

Avoid unnecessary contacts and keep your distance from other people (at least two metres).
Accept help from people around you. Let those around you know what you need. Don’t be afraid to get help and support.

You can call the Pro Senectute hotline (058 591 15 15) or ask the cantonal offices of the Swiss Red Cross or Caritas for more information. At www.infosenior.ch, www.hilf-jetzt.ch via the Five-up app you will find details of further support in your area. If necessary, get a younger person who is familiar with new media to arrange help.

If you live with or are looking after a person with dementia, you can get advice from the national Alzheimer helpline (058 058 80 00) or at www.alzheimer-schweiz.ch.

Get others to do your shopping for you. Ask people around you for help with this or use one of the local sources of support mentioned above. Arrange payment on an individual basis in advance. For example, you could keep a special coronavirus account, use electronic payment or postpone payment till later.

You can also order food and meals online for home delivery. Here too you can use the local sources of support mentioned above or the food retailers’ online stores.

Keep your distance: It’s important to stay at least 2 metres away from other people outside your own household. If friends or neighbours do the shopping for you, they should leave the groceries at your door.

Talk to other people: Let your family, friends and acquaintances know how you are doing. Maintain social contact (keep in touch with people) by phone or digital media. There is nothing wrong with having a chat through the window if you keep the necessary distance.

If you are worried or scared and need to talk to someone, call 143 (Dargebotene Hand/La main tendue/Telefono Amico Ticino e Grigioni Italiano) or find out more on the internet at www.dureschnufe.ch

If you are getting home nursing support, you can continue to do so. Staff at home nursing (Spitex) services, Pro Senectute and other specialist organisations are trained in the necessary rules of hygiene.

If you or the person you are caring for need to go to the doctor, phone them first. If you are asked to go to see the doctor in person, go by car, bike or on foot. If that is not possible, take a taxi. In an emergency, call 144. Always stay at least 2 metres away from other people.

When using public transport, we strongly recommend you wear a face mask if it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2 metres from other passengers.

When deciding on whether to ask other people such as cleaning personnel or tradespeople for help, you should weigh up what is most important: the service which you may urgently need, or the risk that you might get infected by the person providing it. Whatever the case: stay at least 2 metres away from other people.
What should you do if you do not live in the same household as the person you are caring for?

Basically, you can continue to care for them, as long as you follow the rules of hygiene and behaviour and keep your contact to a minimum to reduce the risk of spreading the new coronavirus.

If you go shopping for the person you’re caring for, you should leave the groceries at their door and stay at least 2 metres away from them. It’s important to wash your hands thoroughly beforehand. There’s nothing wrong with having a chat through the window or on the stairs if you keep the necessary distance.

If the person you are caring for needs to go to the doctor, you should call a taxi for them and make them sit on the right-hand side on the back seat. Call 144 if it’s an emergency. It’s important to stay at least 2 metres away from other people.

When using public transport, we strongly recommend you wear a face mask if it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2 metres from other passengers.

If you’re over 65 yourself or have an underlying (pre-existing) condition, you count as a vulnerable person (someone at greater risk). You can leave your home as long as you strictly follow the hygiene and social distancing rules. Avoid places frequented by large numbers of people (e.g. railway stations, public transport) and peak times (e.g. shopping on Saturdays, commuting) Avoid unnecessary contacts and keep your distance from other people (at least two metres).

Accept help for you and the person you are caring for from the people around you. Or look, for example at www.hilf-jetzt.ch, for someone who lives close to the person needing care who can drop by regularly (while keeping to the rules of hygiene and behaviour).

You can also give a home nursing (Spitex) organisation the job of providing the necessary care and nursing. Nursing care can be claimed on mandatory basic health insurance.

If the person receiving care is already receiving home nursing support, they can continue to do so. Home nursing (Spitex) services have qualified staff who are trained in the necessary rules of hygiene.

Keep in touch by phone or digital media with the person you’re caring for.
What should be done if symptoms appear?

If you have symptoms of the new coronavirus disease, stay at home and avoid contact with other people, and in particular with the person being cared for.

The symptoms of the disease are:

– Coughing (in most cases a dry cough)
– Sore throat
– Shortness of breath
– Fever, a feeling of being feverish
– Muscle ache
– Loss of sense of smell and/or taste

Symptoms of illness can vary in severity and can even be mild.

If you have one or more of the more common symptoms, it is quite possible that you have contracted the new coronavirus. This means you should:

1. **Stay at home.** Isolate yourself following the instructions in the PDF on Isolation.

2. **Take the coronavirus check** and answer all the questions as best you can. At the end, you will be given a recommendation as to what to do next. If you are advised to get yourself tested, you will be given instructions on how to proceed. You can also call your doctor to discuss the next steps.

3. **Get yourself tested** if the coronavirus check recommends you do so.

4. **Stay at home** until you get the test results back.

You can find all information on the FOPH website.

If you or the person you are caring for is particularly vulnerable and you or they have symptoms of the disease:

**Immediately phone your doctor or a health centre, even during a weekend.** Tell them that you are calling in connection with the new coronavirus and are a particularly vulnerable person. Describe your symptoms.

**Find out about the disease and its symptoms** before you or the person you are caring for has symptoms of a coronavirus infection. On the FOPH website you’ll find the latest information on the new coronavirus, how to protect yourself and others, and what to do if symptoms appear.
What do you do if you as a family caregiver become ill yourself?

If you become ill – even if you have only mild symptoms – you must go into isolation. So you should have a “plan B” for the event that you become sick: Are there people around you who could step in if you get sick? Who could take care of what tasks?

Prepare a list of helpful information for someone taking your place so that everything is quickly at hand if required. Ideally, you should have the person you are caring for draw up the list or discuss it with them if possible.

Points you could cover in the list:

– What support does the person you are caring for require?
– Which members of their family should be contacted?
– What can the person receiving care do for themselves?
– What points should be paid attention to for the good of the person receiving care?
– If applicable, what medication should they be taking and when? Where is the medication available?
– Names and phone numbers of the most important doctors and other professionals or specialists.
– Has the person receiving care already drawn up an advanced healthcare directive (living will) setting down important arrangements?

If you are drawing up a list of information for someone taking your place as caregiver, you might want to also use the template from Pro Aidants.

Talk to others about what you are going through – your thoughts and feelings – to your family, friends and acquaintances or also to professionals.

Further information


You can also call the 24/7 Coronavirus Infoline on +41 58 463 00 00 for information.