Instructions: Self-isolation

What to do if you have an acute respiratory disease and have to isolate at home

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Due to the increase in COVID-19 cases in Switzerland, the probability that a person with a respiratory disease is infected with the new coronavirus is increased.

You show symptoms of an acute respiratory illness¹ or have suddenly lost your sense of smell and/or taste, possibly caused by new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). Alternatively the disease has been diagnosed in a lab test. You do not need to go to hospital as long as your general state of health is good. However, you have to self-isolate at home immediately for at least ten days to prevent infecting other people. The following instructions explain what measures you should take to avoid transmitting the virus.

Anyone living in the same household or people with whom you have been in intimate contact must self-quarantine. There are separate instructions on self-quarantine on the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) website.

You can find comprehensive information about new coronavirus on the website of the FOPH: http://www.bag.admin.ch/neues-coronavirus.

Monitor your health
- Phone a doctor immediately if you are worried about your state of health or if you experience one of the following warning signs:
  - A persistent high temperature lasting several days
  - A persistent feeling of weakness lasting several days
  - Shortness of breath
  - A persistent feeling of pressure or pain in the chest
  - A feeling of confusion, where you have not experienced this before
  - Bluish coloured lips or face
- If you need to see a doctor, and therefore need to leave the house, wear a facemask. If not available, keep a distance at least two metres from other people.

If you live alone
- Ask family members, friends or a delivery service to deliver groceries and other essential products such as medicines to your home and to leave them outside your door.

If you live with others in the same household
- Stay in your room and keep the door closed. Eat meals by yourself in your room. Air the room regularly.
- Avoid any visits and contacts and only leave the room if absolutely necessary.

¹ e.g. cough, sore throat, shortness of breath with or without a temperature, feverishness, achiness
• Keep a distance of at least two metres from other people.
• Avoid contact with pets.
• Use your own bathroom. If this is not possible, clean all amenities (shower, toilet, washbasin) after each use with a standard household-disinfectant.
• Do not share household items such as crockery, glasses, cups or kitchen utensils with other people. Wash these items carefully after use in the dishwasher or by hand, using washing-up liquid.
• Do not share towels or bed linen with other people. Wash your clothes, bed linen and towels regularly in a washing machine.
• Ask family members, friends or a delivery service to deliver groceries and other essential products such as medicines to your home and to leave them outside your door (during the 10-day self-quarantine of other household members).

Handwashing²
• You and the persons around you must wash hands regularly, for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. If these are not available, clean your hands with hand sanitiser, rubbing the liquid thoroughly into your hands until they are dry. Use soap and water if your hands are clearly dirty.
• Always wash your hands before and after preparing food, before and after eating, after going to the toilet and whenever they are visibly dirty.

Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze
• Cover your mouth and nose with a paper tissue when you cough or sneeze.
• Throw away or wash the material with which you covered your mouth and nose.
• Throw used paper tissues into a separate bin with a plastic rubbish bag in your room.

Wear a face mask (if available)
• When you leave the house to go to an essential doctor’s appointment. If not available, keep a distance of at least two metres from other people.

How to use a face mask correctly
• Wash your hands with water and soap or use a hand sanitiser before putting on the mask.
• Put the hygiene mask on carefully, ensuring that nose and mouth are covered; secure the mask so that it fits tightly against your face.
• Do not touch the mask once you have put it on. Each time you touch a used mask, e.g. when you remove it, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water or use hand sanitiser.
• A face mask can be used for at least 2 to 4 hours (up to 8 hours) even if it gets damp. Then replace it by a new, clean and dry mask. Do not reuse a disposable face mask.
• Throw away disposable face masks immediately once you remove them.
• If you are not able to purchase face masks in the shops or online, ask at your doctor’s surgery if they have any available. Ask a family member, friend or delivery service to deliver the masks to your door.

Observe all preventive measures
• Any waste soiled with bodily fluids (faeces, blood, discharge) should be disposed of in a separate bin with a plastic rubbish bag in your room before it is disposed of with other waste.
• Clean and disinfect any surfaces you touch such as bedside tables, bedframes and other bedroom furniture. Do this daily with a standard household disinfectant.
• Clean bath, basin and toilet after use with a standard household disinfectant.

Advice for parents
• If your child is in isolation, it is a good idea to appoint one person in the household to look after the child. It is recommended that the whole family remains in quarantine if possible, especially those with several children. Depending on the age of the child, you have to adjust the recommended measures on isolating them and wearing a mask individually.

² Video How to wash hands properly: https://youtu.be/gw2Ztu0H0YY
End of the isolation period at home
• A person may come out of isolation 48 hours after showing no further symptoms, provided at least ten days have passed since the first symptoms appeared. If you suddenly lost your sense of smell and/or taste, it may take longer than this for them to return. So if this is the only symptom you still have, you can come out of self-isolation.

After the isolation period
• Continue to observe the rules on hygiene and how to behave in the ‘Protect yourself and others’ campaign: www.bag-coronavirus.ch.

What should people in the same household/intimate contacts do?
Close contacts (people in the same household, intimate contacts) must stay at home for ten days (self-quarantine). Information on self-quarantine can be found on the FOPH website: www.bag.admin.ch/neues-coronavirus

During the ten-day quarantine the above mentioned contacts should:
  o avoid all contact with other people (other than those who are also in quarantine and living in the same household).
  o Continue to monitor their health and self-isolate as soon as symptoms appear. In case of symptoms, they have to follow the recommendations on self-isolation given in this document.
  o If they are in a high-risk group\(^3\), the person should call a doctor as soon as symptoms appear, explain you are in a high-risk group and describe your symptoms and any underlying medical conditions.

The ten-day self-quarantine begins on the day of isolation of the sick person.

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\(^3\) People over the age of 65 and those with high blood pressure, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, cancer or who have a disorder or are undergoing treatment which weakens the immune system.