

**Office of Health Promotion**  
**Information and Resources for Special Populations – COVID-19**

**Should we go to the Dentist?**

**Source:** <https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infectioncontrol/statement-COVID.html>  
<https://cdc.gov/Coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

CDC's guidelines are that if not clinically urgent, dental procedures should be postponed for non-emergency or elective dental procedures. The urgency of a procedure is a decision based on a clinical judgement and should be made on a case by case basis. Dental care that you should have taken care of by a dentist at this time:

- Bleeding that does not stop
- Painful swelling in or around your mouth
- Pain in a tooth, teeth or jawbone
- Gum infection with pain or swelling
- After surgery treatment (dressing change, stitch removal)
- Broken or knocked out tooth
- Denture adjustment for people receiving radiation or other treatment for cancer
- Snipping or adjusting wire of braces that hurts your cheek or gums
- Biopsy of abnormal tissue

A helpful guide to determine what should be reschedule and what needs treatment can be found here: [https://success.ada.org/~media/CPS/Files/COVID/ADA\\_DentalEmerg\\_Patient\\_Flyer.pdf?utm\\_source=mouthhealthy&utm\\_medium=covid-19-mh&utm\\_content=cv-pm-emerg-def-patients-mh&utm\\_campaign=covid-19](https://success.ada.org/~media/CPS/Files/COVID/ADA_DentalEmerg_Patient_Flyer.pdf?utm_source=mouthhealthy&utm_medium=covid-19-mh&utm_content=cv-pm-emerg-def-patients-mh&utm_campaign=covid-19)

Staying healthy and feeling good starts with keeping your mouth healthy  
5 tips by our very own Chicago area dentist, Dr. Gene Romo.

<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/c/cold-and-flu-season>

**What LGBTQ + People Need to Know**

**Source:** National LGBT Cancer Network

<https://cancer-network.org/coronavirus-2019-what-lgbtq-people-need-to-know/>

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, plus (LGBTQ+) people are at particular risk for Coronavirus disease 2019 (or COVID-19):

- LGBTQ+ use tobacco rates that are 50% higher than the general population. Coronavirus 2019 is a respiratory illness that has proven particularly harmful to smokers.
- Higher rates of HIV and cancer among LGBTQ+ individuals mean that a greater number of them may have compromised immunity, leaving them more vulnerable to Coronavirus infection.
- LGBTQ+ population continues to experience discrimination, unwelcoming attitudes and lack of understanding from providers and staff in many health care settings, and as a result, many of them are reluctant to seek medical care except in situations that feel urgent – and perhaps not even then.

- LGBTQ+ people experience health disparities. Health disparities affect the potential Coronavirus 2019 impact on them in two ways:
  1. Access to care barriers leaves them less likely to get medical care, and
  2. Existing health disparities mean more of them live in a state of compromised health. Are there special precautions that LGBTQ+ people should take?

### **Are the special precautions that LGBTQ+ people should take?**

If an LGBTQ+ person has cancer, smokes, is HIV+, is over 65 years old, or has any other fragile health condition, consider taking additional measures to avoid risk of infection. This could include more vigilance about staying away from symptomatic people, it could include avoiding larger gatherings of people, and should include practicing excellent epidemic hygiene, like frequent hand washing and breaking habits of face-touching. All smokers should know they can access free cessation services by calling 1-866-QUIT-YES (1-866-784-8937) or visiting [www.quityest.org](http://www.quityest.org).

### **Persons who use tobacco and e-cigarettes**

**Source: World Health Organization** <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-on-smoking-and-covid-19>

Smokers are likely to be more vulnerable to COVID-19 as the act of smoking means that fingers (and possibly contaminated cigarettes) are in contact with lips which increases the possibility of transmission of virus from hand to mouth. Smokers may also already have lung disease or reduced lung capacity which would greatly increase risk of serious illness.

Smoking products such as water pipes often involve the sharing of mouth pieces and hoses, which could facilitate the transmission of COVID-19 in communal and social settings.

Conditions that increase oxygen needs or reduce the ability of the body to use it properly will put patients at higher risk of serious lung conditions such as pneumonia.

**Source: Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids – Press Release – March 20, 2020**

[https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/press-releases/2020\\_03\\_20\\_covid-19](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/press-releases/2020_03_20_covid-19)

The coronavirus (COVID-19) attacks the lungs, and behaviors that weaken the lungs put individuals at greater risk. The harmful impact of smoking on the lungs is well documented, and there is a growing body of evidence that e-cigarette use (vaping) can also harm lung health.

There is conclusive evidence that smoking increases the risk for respiratory infections, weakens the immune system and is a major cause of several chronic health conditions, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart disease and diabetes. In addition, there is growing evidence that vaping can also harm lung health. These factors put smokers, and most likely vapers as well, at greater risk when confronted with the coronavirus.

There has never been a better time for smokers to quit and for individuals to protect their health by avoiding use of all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.

For more information, please see this recent blog post by Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse. It includes the following:

“Because it attacks the lungs, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 could be an especially serious threat to those who smoke tobacco or marijuana or who vape.”

“It is therefore reasonable to be concerned that compromised lung function or lung disease related to smoking history, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), could put people at risk for serious complications of COVID-19.”

“Vaping, like smoking, may also harm lung health. Whether it can lead to COPD is still unknown, but emerging evidence suggests that exposure to aerosols from e-cigarettes harms the cells of the lung and diminishes the ability to respond to infection

### **Persons with Substance Use Disorders**

**Source:** National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/noras-blog/2020/03/covid-19-potential-implications-individuals-substance-use-disorders>

- COVID-19 could be a serious threat to those who smoke tobacco or marijuana or who vape because it attacks the lungs.
- People with opioid use disorder and methamphetamine use disorder may also be vulnerable due to those drugs’ effect on respiratory and pulmonary health.



### **Persons with Diabetes**

**Source:** <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/preparedness.html>

During natural disasters, emergencies, and hazards people with diabetes face challenges to their health care. If you are an evacuee or are in an emergency situation, it is of prime importance to identify yourself as a person with diabetes and any related conditions, so you can obtain appropriate care. It is also important to prevent dehydration by drinking enough fluids, which can be difficult when drinking water is in short supply. In addition, it is helpful to keep something containing sugar with you at all times, in case you develop hypoglycemia (low blood glucose). To prevent infections, which people with diabetes are more vulnerable to, pay careful attention to the health of your feet, and get medical treatment for any wounds.

The CDC has compiled many [natural disaster and emergency resources](#) in English, Spanish, and several other languages. Below are additional links which may be especially useful for people with diabetes. Some of the following documents are available in Portable Document Format.

#### **Emergency Preparedness**

1. **Emergency Preparedness and You**  
<http://emergency.cdc.gov/preparedness>
2. **Ready—Prepare.Plan.Stay Informed.**  
<http://www.ready.gov>
3. **Federal Emergency Management Agency**  
<http://www.fema.gov>

## Have Supplies on Hand

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/get-ready.html>

- **Contact your healthcare provider to ask about obtaining extra necessary medications** to have on hand in case there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community and you need to stay home for a prolonged period of time.
- If you cannot get extra medications, consider using mail-order for medications.
- Use the drive-thru for medication pick up or delivery.
- **Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies** (tissues, etc.) to treat fever and other symptoms. Most people will be able to recover from COVID-19 at home.
- **Have enough household items and groceries** on hand so that you will be prepared to stay at home for a period of time.

## Persons with Heart Disease or High Blood Pressure

- Persons over 65 with coronary heart disease or hypertension are more likely to be infected and to develop more severe symptoms.
- Persons with heart disease need to remain current with vaccinations, including pneumococcal vaccine given the increased risk of secondary bacterial infection and the influenza vaccination to prevent another source of fever which could be initially confused with coronavirus infection. (source: American College of Cardiology; <https://www.acc.org/latest-in-cardiology/articles/2020/02/13/12/42/acc-clinical-bulletin-focuses-on-cardiac-implications-of-coronavirus-2019-ncov>)

## Heart Health Tips to Stay Active and Healthy

<https://www.heart.org/en/about-us/coronavirus-covid-19-resources>

### Physical activity at home

- [Create an at-home workout circuit](#)
- [Workout at work, just in your home office](#)
- [Get the whole family moving at home](#)
- [Practice these balance exercises in your living room](#)
- [Stretch!](#)
- [Get out and walk](#)
- [Don't make excuses to overdo it on screen time](#)
- [Use the time to set your fitness goals](#)
- Try any of our [daily tips for physical activity for your family](#) that work for your current circumstances and comfort level
- If you find yourself away from home for an unexpected amount of time, [travel healthy](#)

### Shelf-Stable Healthy Eating

If you're concerned about having healthy foods on hand while limiting your exposure to crowds, these heart-healthy recipes can all be made with shelf-stable ingredients such as:

- Canned, frozen and dried fruits and vegetables (low or no salt and sugar options)
- Canned meats like light tuna or white meat chicken (salt free), packed in water
- Frozen chicken breast is safe for up to 1-year in a freezer set to zero degrees or below (store as air-tightly as possible to preserve maximum freshness)
- Dried beans and legumes (or canned with no salt added)
- Dried whole grains like brown rice and quinoa
- Dried herbs and spices

- Shelled eggs are safe 3-5 weeks and unopened egg substitute is safe up to 1 year in the refrigerator

### Wellbeing / Dealing with Stress

- Use an unexpected change of pace to [practice mindful eating](#)
- Establish a new [bedtime](#) or [morning](#) routine
- Manage a stressful circumstance by [cleaning up your sleep hygiene](#) or with [some tech tweaks](#)
- [Practice loving-kindness meditation](#)
- [Take Action to control stress](#) this week
- [Fight stress with healthy habits](#) to manage your circumstance

### Persons having groceries and other packages delivered to them

Source: National Institutes of Health

<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/new-coronavirus-stable-hours-surfaces>

- You have your groceries delivered but are they safe? I have been looking all over for answers.



### Persons with or caring for someone with Alzheimer’s disease and all other dementia

Source: Alzheimer’s Association [https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/coronavirus-\(covid-19\)-tips-for-dementia-care](https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/coronavirus-(covid-19)-tips-for-dementia-care).

The Alzheimer’s Association has a Helpline available to anyone 24 hours a day/ 7days per week 800-272-3900 or <https://alz.org/help-support/resources/helpline>

Persons with Alzheimer's disease and all other dementia may forget to wash their hands or take other recommended precautions to prevent illness. In addition, diseases like COVID-19 and the flu may worsen cognitive impairment due to dementia.

### **Tips for Dementia Caregivers at Home**

Caregivers of individuals living with Alzheimer's and all other dementia should follow guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and consider the following tips:

- For people living with dementia, increased confusion is often the first symptom of any illness. If a person living with dementia shows rapidly increased confusion, contact your health care provider for advice.
- People living with dementia may need extra and/or written reminders and support to remember important hygienic practices from one day to the next.
- Consider placing signs in the bathroom and elsewhere to remind people with dementia to wash their hands with soap for 20 seconds.
- Demonstrate thorough hand-washing.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be a quick alternative to hand-washing if the person with dementia cannot get to a sink or wash his/her hands easily.
- Think ahead and make alternative plans for the person with dementia should adult day care, respite, etc. be modified or cancelled in response to COVID-19.
- Think ahead and make alternative plans for care management if the primary caregiver should become sick.

### **Tips for Caregivers of Individuals in Nursing Homes**

The CDC has provided guidance to facilities on infection control and prevention of COVID-19 in nursing homes. This guidance is for the health and safety of residents. Precautions may vary based on local situations.

- Check with the facility regarding their procedures for managing COVID-19 risk. Ensure they have your emergency contact information and the information of another family member or friend as a backup.
- Do not visit your family member if you have any signs or symptoms of illness.
- Depending on the situation in your local area, facilities may limit or not allow visitors. This is to protect the residents, but it can be difficult if you are unable to see your family members.
- If visitation is not allowed, ask the facility how you can have contact with your family member. Options include telephone calls, video chat or even emails to check in.
- If your family member is unable to engage in calls or video chats, ask the facility how you can keep in touch with facility staff in order to get updates.

### **Persons with Asthma**

**Source:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/asthma.html>

COVID-19 can affect your respiratory tract (nose, throat, lungs), cause an asthma attack, and possibly lead to pneumonia and acute respiratory disease.

### **Follow your Asthma Action Plan**

- Take your asthma medication exactly as prescribed. Talk to your healthcare provider, insurer, and pharmacist about creating an emergency supply of prescription medications, such as asthma inhalers. Make sure that you have 30 days of non-prescription medications and supplies on hand too in case you need to stay home for a long time.
- Know how to use your inhaler [https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/inhaler\\_video/default.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/inhaler_video/default.htm)
- Avoid your asthma triggers. Most common triggers are:
  - Tobacco Smoke

- Dust Mites
- Outdoor Air Pollution
- Cockroach Allergen
- Pets
- Mold
- Smoke from Burning Wood or Grass
- Other Triggers
  - flu, colds, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), sinus infections, allergies, breathing in some chemicals, and acid reflux.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces. Avoid using disinfectants that can cause an asthma attack.
- Strong emotions can trigger an asthma attack. Take steps to help yourself cope with stress and anxiety. <https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/index.asp>

### **Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Specific**

If you feel unsafe in your home during this quarantine period, there is still help for you.

<https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/get-updates-information-covid-19/>

Are you hurting from your stay at home with an abusive partner? There is hope. Visit [www.icasa.org](http://www.icasa.org) to connect with local crisis centers. Also, visit <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/get-updates-information-covid-19/> and <https://www.rainn.org/>

Your physical, mental and emotional health is important at this time. Remember to: Stay calm, Stay connected, Get outside, Stay entertained

Stay healthy: Checkout [VIDEO | This 20-minute hotel workout is perfect for social distancing](#)

Other ideas: <https://www.facebook.com/nsvrc>

Now the kids are home and working online. How do you keep them safe? [Kids online more thanks to COVID-19? Here are five Internet filtering services for families.](#)

Child abuse prevention <https://www.preventchildabuseillinois.org/>

"The uncertainty around the coronavirus may feel overwhelming for survivors already coping with trauma & stress. The National Sexual Assault Hotline continues to be a confidential, anonymous resource 24/7". To get help: Call 800.656.HOPE (4673); Visit [online.rainn.org](http://online.rainn.org)  
Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault <http://www.icasa.org/>

### **Persons living with cancer**

Source: American Cancer Society <https://www.cancer.org/about-us/what-we-do/coronavirus-covid-19-and-cancer.html>

**Should people still get screened for cancer during this pandemic?**

<https://www.cancer.org/latest-news/common-questions-about-the-new-coronavirus-outbreak.html>

Health officials are urging everyone to stay home as much as possible to further reduce the risk of being exposed to COVID-19. What should you do if you're due for a cancer screening? According to Dr. Richard Wender, Chief Cancer Control Officer for the American Cancer Society, "the American Cancer Society recommends that no one should go to a health care facility for routine cancer screening at this time." This means if you're due for your screening to detect breast, colon, cervix, or lung cancer, postpone your appointment for the near future. "Remember, these screening tests save lives. When restrictions lift, it's important to reschedule any screening test that you're due to receive," says Wender. "Getting back on track with cancer screening should be a high priority," he adds.

Screening tests are different from tests your doctor might order if you have symptoms that could be from cancer. If you're having symptoms you're concerned about, contact your health care provider about the best course of action for you at this time.

### **Cancer Caregiving During the Coronavirus Outbreak**

<https://www.cancer.org/latest-news/cancer-caregiving-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>

Caring for someone with cancer has become even more serious because of the coronavirus pandemic. The person you care for may be at high risk of infection with COVID-19 because cancer and cancer treatments often weaken their immune systems. You may be at higher risk yourself if you are older or have an underlying health condition. Staying healthy protects you and the person you're caring for. That means taking extra steps to keep both of you from getting sick.

People with certain cancer types, including lymphomas, multiple myeloma, and most types of leukemia are at the highest risk for infections. These cancers cause changes that make the immune system unable to work as well as it should. People who have recently had surgery for cancer and those in active treatment who are getting chemotherapy, radiation, targeted therapy, or immunotherapy may also be at higher risk. Some treatments, such as stem cell or bone marrow transplants, involve giving high doses of drugs that may cause long-term weakening of the immune system. But most people who have finished treatment (especially if it was years ago) probably have an immune system that's back to normal.

If you aren't sure whether the person you're caring for has a weakened immune system, ask their health care team. It's also a good idea to find out if their insurance covers telehealth, and if the cancer care team is using it to help communicate with patients during this time. Have a back-up plan ready in case you, the person you're caring for, or someone else in the household gets sick.

### **Lower the Risk of Illness**

<https://www.cancer.org/latest-news/cancer-caregiving-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>

Stay home as much as you can and have contact with as few people as possible. Stay in touch with the cancer care team and be ready for possible changes to treatment plans. Read our list of questions you may want to ask.

Take these extra steps to protect yourself and the person you're caring for:

- Don't travel. Follow your state and local rules about traveling and leaving your home. Avoid crowds and public places. Go out as little as possible. Ask the cancer care team if medical appointments should be kept or postponed. If you do need to go out, take hand



sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol to clean your hands and then wash with soap and water when you get home.

- If the doctor wants to keep treatment appointments, only one caregiver should go along. No one who is sick or has any symptoms should go to a cancer treatment center. Be prepared to be screened at the door or to have to wait outside because some centers may not allow caregivers in the building at all.
- At home, use household disinfectants regularly on things that you touch a lot, such as door handles, cell phones, remote controls, computer keyboards, and any items that are used by other people.
- If you have to go out, wash your hands with soap and water as soon as you get home, wipe down the items you've brought home (including your purse, wallet, and cell phone), and wash your hands again after wiping them down.
- When at home, wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before eating and before touching your face.
- Wash your hands after using the bathroom, blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Wash your hands after touching animals, collecting trash, or taking out garbage.
- Wash your hands after touching items used by others.
- Read more about more ways to help someone with cancer lower their risk of infection.

### **Cancer Patient Information**

#### **I receive cancer treatment at a medical facility. What should I do about getting treatment?**

<https://www.cancer.gov/contact/emergency-preparedness/coronavirus>

If you are receiving treatment for your cancer, please call your health care provider before going to your next treatment appointment and follow their guidance. As health care systems adjust their activities to address COVID-19, doctors treating cancer patients may also have to change when and how cancer treatment and follow-up visits are carried out. The risk of missing a cancer treatment or medical appointment must be weighed against the possibility of exposing a patient to infection.

Some cancer treatments can be safely delayed, while others cannot. Some routine follow-up visits may be safely delayed or conducted through telemedicine. If you take oral cancer drugs, you may be able to have prescribed treatments sent directly to you, so you don't have to go to a pharmacy. A hospital or other medical facility may ask you to go to a specific clinic, away from those treating people sick with coronavirus.

The coronavirus situation is changing daily, with states and cities making changes in how they are handling quarantine and critical health care, so check with your provider as needed.

#### **I participate in a clinical trial at a medical facility. What should I do?**

<https://www.cancer.gov/contact/emergency-preparedness/coronavirus>

If you are in a cancer treatment clinical trial, please call your clinical trial research team and follow their guidance. Physicians and scientists at NCI are working with doctors and health care staff who carry out NCI-sponsored clinical trials across the United States and in Canada to implement specific measures within our clinical trials networks that will address the current challenges of providing care to patients enrolled in clinical trials. The health of each clinical trial patient is the institute's most important concern, and NCI is flexible about how clinical trial treatments can be completed and when tests and assessments must be done.

The Institutional Review Boards that oversee each protocol to ensure the safety of patients will work with investigators quickly to make changes that will provide flexibility while maintaining patient safety.

### **American Cancer Society Helpful Links**

#### **General information Resources:**

- [Common Questions About the New Coronavirus Outbreak](#) - this article is updated often
- [Listen to our Theory Lab podcast with Dr. Len and David Sampson on what cancer patients and caregivers need to know about COVID-19.](#)