



OLDER ADULTS: STAYING SAFE, HEALTHY and ENGAGED

Follow these practices while you are at home during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak.

Most important is protecting yourself from the virus by doing the following.



Wash your hands often with soap and water or hand sanitizer for at least 20 seconds.



Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.



Disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces at home, like countertops, door handles, TV remotes, phones, and computer keyboards.



Avoid going to the gym, senior centers, casinos or church.



Try to keep at least 6 feet of distance between yourself and others.



Go to the grocery store during special hours for seniors or at times when there are less people.



Keep antibacterial wipes handy to wipe down high-touch surfaces, like the grocery cart, door handles or keypads (bank ATMs).



This will be hard, but it is best to only hug the people you live with. Spend time visiting with other family and friends in an outdoor, well-ventilated place with a mask on.

Manage your medications.

Be sure you have enough of your prescription medication on hand, ideally a 90-day supply. This includes any over-the-counter medication you might need if you do get sick.

Try to avoid over-the-counter medications that include Benadryl or Chlortrimeton (like Tylenol PM[®], Advil PM[®] or Nyquil[®]). These can increase your risk of falling and feeling confused.

Be sure to take care of your body.

- Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate.
- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
- Exercise regularly.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs.

Check out our separate handout (Staying Active) for ways to stay physically active during this time. Options include taking walks outside, and doing stretching and strengthening activities you can do at home. The [Go4Life website](#) from the National Institute on Aging has additional resources and online exercises. Some other options include:

Sit and Be Fit is a TV series showing safe and low-strain ways to exercise, often while staying seated. The program is shown on many public television stations – check your local TV listings. You can also find it on YouTube [here](#).

Yoga with Adriene has hundreds of free online yoga videos, including some just for older adults that can be modified depending on your flexibility. Find these also on [YouTube](#).

Take breaks from the news and social media.

Hearing about the COVID-19 pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting. Watching, reading or listening to news stories and social media can add to your stress. Positive alternatives to usual news sources include watching TV programs other than the news or checking out the [Good News Network website](#). Another idea is to keep a daily notebook or journal where you can write down at least three things you are grateful for or that are going well each day.

Do activities you enjoy, like:

- Art, music, reading or writing poetry
- Spending time with a pet
- A faith-based activity
- Meditation
- Cooking or baking
- Doing puzzles, like crosswords, Sudoku, solitaire or jigsaw
- Talking with friends or other supportive people you know and trust over the phone or on your computer or for a socially distant visit.

IMPORTANT: Be cautious to avoid scams and fake information when you are online. Never give out personal or financial information online.

Try something new.

- Learn a new language through an app like [Duolingo](#) (only works with select browsers).
- Go on a virtual [tour of the National Parks](#).
- Travel the world by watching full episodes of the many trips taken by [Rick Steves](#).
- Learn a new subject by taking one of 450 [Ivy League courses online](#) being offered for free right now.
- Hone your art skills by accessing [free coloring books](#) from some world-class libraries and museums, like the Met, New York Public Library, Smithsonian and more.
- Visit some of these same places by taking an online tour of the [Smithsonian Museum of National History](#). The [Google Arts & Culture site](#) offers introductions to dozens of international museums all over the world.

Stay connected with others.

- Stay in touch with others by phone, email or other online tools, like Zoom and Facebook.
- Arrange to see friends for an outside visit and remember to mask up and maintain social distance.
- Ask for help if you are feeling like stress is keeping you from your daily activities for several days in a row.
- Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

Offer some help.

It has been proven that it helps us when we help others. Here are some ideas:

- Read a book to a grandchild over the phone or by using FaceTime or Zoom.
- Play or sing a favorite song over the phone with a friend.
- Write a letter or send a card to someone who has fewer social connections. To be safe, use water to seal the envelope and wash your hands well before you write it.
- Send a letter to someone you do not know through the “Dear Neighbor Project,” mailing it to: The Senior Loneliness Line “Dear Neighbor Project”, c/o Bill Fitzpatrick, 5100 SW Macadam Ave., Suite 400, Portland, OR 97239.

Ask for assistance.

You can avoid the grocery store by ordering your groceries online. Many stores, offer online ordering and delivery. Store to Door is another good option for grocery delivery.

You may want to try Meals on Wheels. Anyone age 60 years and older is eligible to receive services from Meals on Wheels. Those younger than 60 but who are homebound and unable to make healthy meals also qualify for the program. Caregivers and spouses are also eligible.

Joining your local neighborhood online group is also an option. Social platforms like [Nextdoor](#) help connect neighbors living near each other. They can keep you current about what is going on in your area.

If you have a neighbor, a friend or someone from your church who is younger than age 60, ask them to lend a hand.

In the face of the current situation, there are many offers of help from people, some of whom have been laid off from their job. They can assist with errands, grocery shopping and home maintenance. Many offers for assistance are free. It is always important to approach these offers with appropriate caution. Do not allow anyone you do not know or trust in your home.

Do not forget that the [Aging and Disability Resource Connection \(ADRC\)](#) can also help connect you to services should you need them. Their phone number is [1-855-673-2372](tel:1-855-673-2372). Outside of Oregon, find the [Area Agency on Aging](#) for your area.

Advice for caregivers.

With many day center and senior centers closed, life for those with dementia or other illnesses requiring caregiving has changed. This change may mean increased hardship for the person with dementia, as well as their caregiver, who is often their spouse or adult children. Remember that keeping a simple, stable routine that includes regular physical activity and healthy meals is helpful for everyone.

Find more information at Emory University's [Caregiving in a Time of Coronavirus](#). Most importantly, prioritize self-care for yourself as a caregiver and ask for assistance if needed.

Support for those in distress.

Stress, anxiety and other depression-like feelings are common reactions in uncertain times.

- Recommendations from the CDC for dealing with stress and coping can be found [here](#).
- Lines for Life (Senior Loneliness Line) supports seniors in Oregon communities who are feeling lonely and are having difficulty connecting. Their phone number is 503-200-1633 or toll-free 800-282-7035.
- [The Friendship Line](#) is run by the Institute on Aging and is available 24 hours a day to anyone 60 years and older or anyone living with a disability. They also make outreach calls to lonely older adults. Their phone number is toll-free 800-971-0016.
- The Disaster Distress Helpline is a 24/7, 365-day-a-year national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any traumatic event like the coronavirus. Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor. This toll-free, multilingual and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories.

Additional Resources

- Diatribe.org is a patient-focused, free, online resource has a [page](#) dedicated to resources on COVID-19 for people with diabetes.
- The GeriPal blog has posted some [additional virtual resources](#) for older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic.