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Guide for people at risk of serious coronavirus illness

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus and we are still learning how it works. However early information out of China has shown that there are some groups of people who may be more at risk of serious illness if they catch coronavirus.

These groups are NOT thought to have a higher risk of catching coronavirus, just are more at risk of becoming ill if they DO catch it.

It is likely you are more at risk of serious illness if you catch coronavirus and you are one of the following:
- 60 years of age and over.
- Have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and lung disease
- Have a weak immune system due to underlying medical conditions such as cancer or HIV/AIDS, have had an organ or bone-marrow transplant or are taking immune suppressant treatment for conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis (MS) and inflammatory bowel diseases

If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of your age or because you have a serious long-term health problem, it is extra important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of getting sick with the disease.
- **Speak to your line manager confidentially and explain that you are in a vulnerable risk group**
- Assess with them if any additional measures are needed to be put in place to help protect you at this time such as staying away from the office and working from home if possible
- Avoid using public transport as much as possible and if you must do this – try and avoid peak travelling times
- Practise social distancing and keep your distance between yourself and others of at least 1 metre or 3 feet
- Take everyday precautions and avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Wash your hands after touching hard surfaces such as door handles, handrails, elevator bells etc.
- Avoid casual social contact and don't shake hands or hug/kiss people
- Avoid touching our face, nose, mouth, eyes etc – especially if you have touched any hard surfaces
- Avoid large events and gathering spaces, confined spaces, large crowds (at cinemas, concert halls, sports venues) and places where you are not able to keep a secure distance of at least 1 to 2 metres or 3 – 6 feet.

- Go shopping out with peak hours if possible, and
- Defer any non-essential travel - avoid cruise travel and any non-essential air travel.

If a large number of people get infected with COVID-19 in your community, it could last for a long time. Depending on how severe the outbreak is, public health officials may well recommend community movement restrictions and other actions such as limiting large gatherings to reduce people's risk of being exposed to COVID-19 and slow the spread and reduce the impact of disease.

In addition, if you are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19, you should:
- Take everyday precautions to keep space between yourself and others when you go out in the community - keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact and wash your hands often.
- Avoid crowds as much as possible.
- Contact your doctor 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.
- Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies (tissues, etc.) to treat fever and other symptoms. **Remember - 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 if needed.
- Regularly clean and disinfect your home to remove germs: practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (for example: tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, sinks & mobile phones)
- Consider ways of getting food brought to your house through family, social, or commercial networks

And most importantly have a plan for if you get sick:
- Speak with your doctor for more information about monitoring your health for symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.
- Stay in touch with others by phone or email. You may need to ask for help from friends, family, neighbours, community health workers, etc. if you become sick.
- Watch for symptoms and emergency warning signs
- Pay attention for potential COVID-19 symptoms including fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
- If you feel like you are developing symptoms, call your doctor.

Also make sure you now the emergency warning signs for COVID-19 and get medical attention immediately.

In adults, emergency warning signs include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability/difficulties to arouse
- Bluish lips or face

In addition, make sure that you have spoken with your doctor for any other sign or symptoms that you particularly should look out for

What to Do if You Do Get Sick
- Stay home and call your doctor
- Let them know about your symptoms. Tell them that you have or may have COVID-19. This will help them advise what you need to do as well as take care of you and keep other people from getting infected or exposed.
- If you are not sick enough to be hospitalised, you can recover at home. Follow your doctors and local health authority instructions for how to take care of yourself at home.

And know when and how to get emergency help. Remember get medical attention immediately if you have any of the emergency warning signs listed above.