What High Risk Patients Need to Know About COVID-19

For people with chronic medical conditions

Read this brochure to learn:

- what is COVID-19
- who is at high risk
- what are the symptoms of COVID-19
- what can I do to reduce my risk of COVID-19
- what should I do if I think I have COVID-19
What is COVID-19?
COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new coronavirus first detected in late 2019. Coronaviruses are a group of viruses that can cause infections like the common cold, bronchitis, pneumonia and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

Most people who develop COVID-19 will have mild symptoms. But, people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of developing more severe symptoms and health problems from COVID-19 that could result in death. At this time, there is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19.

Who is at high risk?
- Older adults
- Cancer patients who:
  - have lung cancer
  - have cancers of the blood or bone marrow like leukemia or lymphoma
  - are being treated with chemotherapy, immunotherapy or other treatments that weaken the immune system
- People taking immunosuppressant medicines (medicines that suppress or weaken the immune system)
- People with diabetes
- People with heart disease
- People who have had a solid organ transplant, for example, a heart or liver transplant
- People with severe respiratory (breathing) conditions including all cystic fibrosis, high spinal cord injuries, severe asthma and severe COPD
- People with rare diseases that increase the risk of infections such as
homozgyous sickle cell

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?
The symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- a fever over 38 °C (100.4 °F)
- new or worsening cough
- shortness of breath
- muscle aches and pains
- sore throat
- runny nose

Monitor yourself for symptoms. Take your temperature every day and log any symptoms that develop (for example, sore throat, new cough).

If you develop a symptom, stay home and call your health care provider or local public health unit and tell them about your symptoms.

What can I do to reduce my risk of getting COVID-19?
Some of the best ways to reduce your risk include:

Self-isolate
All people over the age of 70 and those at high risk should self-isolate.
Self-isolate means staying at home and avoiding contact with other people.

When self-isolating:

- Do not use public transit, taxis or share ride.
- Do not go to work, school or any other public place.
- If you have to leave your home for any reason (for example, to come to the hospital or to get groceries), wear a mask that covers your nose and
mouth. Stay at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from other people.

Avoid contact with others

- Only have visitors you must see, such as care providers.
- Stay away from older adults and other people with chronic medical conditions.
- As much as possible, stay in a separate room away from other people. Use a separate bathroom if you have one.
- Make sure that shared rooms have good airflow (for example, open a window).
- If these steps are not possible, stay at least 2 metres away from other people and wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth.
- If you cannot wear a mask, other people should wear a mask when they are in the same room as you.

Always practice good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water and wash for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand gel that contains at least 70% alcohol.
- Wash your hands:
  - before eating or touching your face
  - after using the bathroom
  - after coughing or sneezing
  - after entering your home
  - after touching surfaces commonly touched by others (for example, handrails in public spaces)

Other precautions

- Sneeze or cough into your sleeve or use a tissue and throw it away after
each use. Then wash your hands.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. You could get COVID-19 if you touch a surface that has the virus on it.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces often. Be sure to clean surfaces that people touch a lot, such as doorknobs, phones, light switches and keyboards.

**Keep away from people who are sick or who have travelled recently**

- Avoid people who are sick.
- Avoid people who have travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days.

**Make a plan**

It helps to have a plan to reduce the need to leave your house.

Plan to:

- Ask a friend, neighbour or family member to bring your supplies if possible.
- Find services that can deliver food or medicines to your door. Phone or order online. Arrange to have supplies left outside your front door to reduce contact.
  
  - Rinse all fruit and vegetables. Wash your hands after unpacking your items.
- If you have to do grocery shopping, do it at off-peak hours when it is less crowded. Wear a mask and keep at least 2 metres away from others.
- If you have a medical appointment, ask your care team if it is safe and possible to have a virtual visit over the telephone or a video chat.
- If you must use public transit, travel outside of the busy rush hour. Wear a mask and keep at least 2 metres away from others.

Have these supplies ready to ensure you do not need to leave your home:
• Ask your health care provider about extra medicine in case you need to stay home for a long time. Having extra medicine means you can also avoid going to a crowded pharmacy.

• Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies (for example, tissues) to treat fever and other symptoms in case you get sick.

• Stock up on the supplies you would need if you had to stay home for a few weeks, such as groceries, pet food and cleaning products. You do not need to panic buy.

Plan what you will do if you become sick. Have a list of people who you can call for help with chores and errands.

**Speak with loved ones and friends about what they can do to protect you.**

Remind them of how important it is to:

• practice physical distancing (keeping people farther apart in person to prevent COVID-19 from spreading)

• practice good hand hygiene

• stay at home (if they do not live with you)

Family members and friends might find it hard not to visit or help. Remind them that virtual visits can work just as well. Stay connected through your phone, internet or social media.

**What should I do if I think I have COVID-19?**

If you are having trouble breathing or experiencing other severe symptoms, call 911 immediately.

If you are worried that you may have COVID-19, you can:
• self-isolate from other people as soon as you notice symptoms

• use this online assessment tool: https://www.covid19toronto.ca/

• contact your primary care provider, your local public health unit, or Telehealth Ontario at 1 866 797 0000.

• do not visit an assessment centre for testing unless you have been referred by a health care

For more information

Information about COVID-19 is changing quickly. For the most up-to-date information:

• call Telehealth Ontario: 1 866 797 000

• call Toronto Public Health Helpline: 416 338 7600 or 311 after hours

• visit the UHN COVID-19 webpage: https://www.uhn.ca/covid19

• visit the Ontario COVID-19 webpage: https://covid-19.ontario.ca/

• follow UHN Twitter accounts: @UHN; @UHNPatientExp; @ipacuhn; @myUHNPortal

Access your health record online

Access your health record online through myUHN Patient Portal, a secure website for UHN patients.

With myUHN, you can access your UHN appointments, lab results, clinic notes and reports as soon as they become available from your computer, smartphone or tablet.

For more information or to get your registration code, contact myUHN Support at:

• 416 340 3777

• myUHN@uhn.ca
Learn more at [www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/myUHN](http://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/myUHN).