

# Your Guide to Managing COVID-19 at Home

**For patients going home from UHN who have COVID-19**

Read this brochure to learn more about:

- What to do before you leave the hospital
- What to do when you get home
- How to manage your symptoms
- Where to go for more information



Patient Education

# **Before you leave the hospital**

1. Review the information in this package. Talk to your health care team if you have questions about this information.
2. Let your health care team know if you need help contacting your pharmacy about your medications.
3. If you aren't already registered, ask your care team for a link to sign up for myUHN Patient Portal or visit [myUHN.ca](https://myUHN.ca).

## **Going home**

When you leave the hospital:

- Wear a mask, including in areas where masks are no longer required
- Do not remove the mask until you are inside your home.
- Keep your mask on and make sure it always covers your nose and mouth. Do not touch your face or mask.
- Sit in the back seat.
- Open the car windows.

## **What do I do when I get home?**

The most important thing to do is to **self-isolate and self-monitor**.

<b>Self-Isolate</b>
Start counting days: Day 0 is the day your symptoms started. If you never had symptoms, day 0 is the day you took a COVID-19 test.
<b>Why self-isolate?</b>
Self-isolating will help prevent the spread of germs and others from becoming sick.
<b>How to self-isolate</b>

- Public Health Ontario's [How to self-isolate fact sheet](#) provides instructions on how to isolate in a home setting.
- Avoid non-essential travel during isolation to high-risk settings (e.g. hospitals, long-term care) and stay home if possible.
- If sharing a home, try to limit use of shared spaces.
- Wear a high-quality mask if you must be around others.
- Practice hand hygiene

### **When to end self-isolation at home**

- The length of time you need to self-isolate depends on symptoms improving and whether you have a weakened immune system.
- Isolate until you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and/or respiratory symptom improvement for 24 hours.
- People with weakened immune systems, such as those receiving chemotherapy, should isolate for at least 10 days.
- If you are unsure if your symptoms are improving or if you have a weakened immune system, talk to a healthcare provider for further guidance.

**\*Note:** symptoms like loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and do not need to be resolved before ending isolation. Key symptoms to watch for are fever, respiratory (shortness of breath, cough) and gastrointestinal (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea) symptoms.

### **How do I know if I have a weak immune system?**

You may have a weak immune system because of a health condition or medication that you are taking (for example, if receiving chemotherapy to treat cancer).

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you are not sure whether you have a weak immune system.

## **What do I do once my self-isolation period is over?**

Continue to monitor for symptoms and follow physical distancing and masking guidelines.

For more information about how to prevent the spread of COVID-19, visit the Toronto Public Health's [Reduce Virus Spread](#) (<https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-protect-yourself-others/covid-19-reduce-virus-spread/>) webpage.

## **I live with other people. What do they need to do?**

Your health care team will give you the [Guide for Caregivers, Household Members and Close Contacts](#) handout (<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-guide-isolation-caregivers.pdf?la=en>) which explains what your household members need to do when you get home.

If your household members develop symptoms, they should follow the [How to Self-Isolate](#) (<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-how-to-self-isolate.pdf?la=en>) guide and get tested, if eligible to do so.

They will need to practice hand hygiene, wear a mask near you and others, and set up a separate bedroom and bathroom for themselves, if possible.

## **Who else should I notify?**

You should notify **high-risk contacts (people you do not live with)** of their exposure and that they are required to self-monitor for symptoms. This includes if you test positive on a PCR test or a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT).

## **What does close contact mean?**

Close contact means you were close to someone (less than 2 meters away) for at least 15 minutes, or for multiple, short periods of time, without a mask.

## **Please notify anyone that:**

- If you **have symptoms**: you came into close contact with within the 48 hours before your symptoms began;
- If you **do not have symptoms**: you came into close contact with within 48 hours before your test date and until you started self-isolating.

## **Some guidelines include:**

- Non-household contacts are required to **self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days**, but do not need to isolate.
- If they develop any symptoms, self-isolate immediately, get tested if eligible to do so, and follow the isolation guidelines for their situation.
- If leaving home, please follow all public health measures.

**They should NOT visit any highest risk settings.** This includes hospitals, long-term care or retirement homes, congregate living settings.

## **How will I feel? What should I do if my symptoms get worse?**



### **What to expect once I'm home**

#### **I may still have symptoms such as:**

- Fever (over 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Feeling tired for a few weeks
- Nausea, diarrhea, and decreased appetite



## What to expect once I'm home

### Take these actions:

1. Take your medicine as instructed by your health care team
2. Drink lots of fluid throughout the day
3. Get rest
4. For cough and shortness of breath:
  - Use a humidifier or hot shower to help your cough
  - Use pursed lip breathing to slow down your breathing and open your airways. Slowly breathe in through your nose, then slowly breathe out through your mouth while tightly pressing (pursing) your lips.
5. Quitting or reducing smoking, vaping, and drug use can help lower your risk of developing severe symptoms



### Watch for these symptoms

- My fever is still over 38°C (100.4 °F) even when I take medication
- My breathing is getting worse (it is harder than normal to breathe or catch my breath)
- My cough is getting worse, and I am coughing up mucus that is green, yellow, bloody, or smells bad
- I have chest pain when coughing



## Watch for these symptoms

### Take these actions:

1. Contact the Connected COVID Care Virtual Clinic:

- Phone: 416 340 4800 (extension 8456#)
- Email: [COVIDCare@uhn.ca](mailto:COVIDCare@uhn.ca)

Note: the clinic is open Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.

2. Watch your symptoms closely to see if they are getting worse



## Watch for these signs of an emergency

- I have trouble breathing during simple tasks like walking across a room or talking
- I have chest pain that does not go away
- I feel confused
- I feel very drowsy, weak, or dizzy

### Take these actions:

1. Call 911 or go to your nearest Emergency Department

2. Wear a mask and tell the 911 operator or triage nurse at the hospital that you have been tested for COVID-19.

**Do not drive yourself or take public transportation to the hospital.**

# **How can I manage feeling nervous and worried about COVID-19?**

It is normal to feel nervous and worried about COVID-19. Knowing this and paying attention to your mental health is important.

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- worsening of chronic health problems
- increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs

Take care of yourself, your friends and your family to help cope with stress. There are services available to help.

Contact 211 Ontario if you need information on mental health support services.

For more information about 211, read [Programs and Services to Help You During COVID-19](#)

([https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health\\_Information/Health\\_Topics/Documents/Programs\\_and\\_Services\\_to\\_Help\\_You\\_During\\_COVID19.pdf](https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health_Information/Health_Topics/Documents/Programs_and_Services_to_Help_You_During_COVID19.pdf)).

## **Where can I get more information on COVID-19?**

For the most up-to-date information, visit:

- [Toronto Public Health COVID-19](#)  
(<https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/>)
- [UHN COVID-19](#)  
(<https://www.uhn.ca/covid19>)