

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

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. Arrange for **1** family member or friend to drive you home.
 - **Do not** take public transportation such as the bus, streetcar or subway.
 - Take a taxi or car service if you cannot arrange a ride. Ask your nurse for help. You will need to pay for the ride.

3. Ask your health care team whether medications can be delivered to the unit, or arrange with your local pharmacy to have your medications delivered to your home.
 - **Do not** go to the pharmacy to pick up your medications.
 - Talk to your health care team at UHN to make arrangements to get your medicine. Be ready with the following information:
 - Your address and phone number
 - Your health card number
 - Your drug insurance plan information
 - Your credit card information, if available
 - Let your health care team know if you need help contacting your pharmacy.
4. Contact myUHN Support at 416 340 3777 or myUHN@uhn.ca if you have questions about your myUHN Patient Portal account or need help registering. Note: myUHN office hours are Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm.

Going home

When you leave the hospital:

- You will get 2 masks:
 - Wear 1 mask out of the hospital. Do not remove the mask until you are inside your home. Follow the instructions on [How to take off a mask](#) on the next pages.
 - Keep the other mask to wear to the hospital in case you need to come back.
- Meet your driver at the hospital's patient and visitor entrance:
 - Toronto General Hospital: Elizabeth Street entrance

- Toronto Western Hospital: Nassau Street entrance

In the car:

- Keep your mask on and make sure it covers your nose and mouth at all times. Do not touch your face or mask.
- Sit in the back seat.
- Open the car windows.
- If you take a taxi or car service, write down the name of the taxi or car service company and the license plate of the car. Toronto Public Health may ask you for this information.

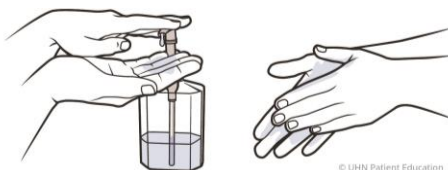
Taxi or car service company: _____

License plate: _____

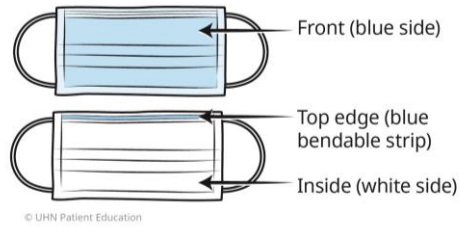
- The person driving you also needs to wear a mask or face covering.

How to put on a mask

1. Clean your hands before touching the mask or your face.



2. Check that the bendable strip is at the top. The white side should be facing you.



3. Hold the mask by the ear loops.



4. Place each loop around each ear.



5. Gently pinch the stiff edge on the top of the mask around your nose.

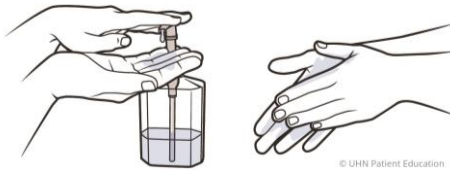


6. Pull the bottom of the mask over your chin.



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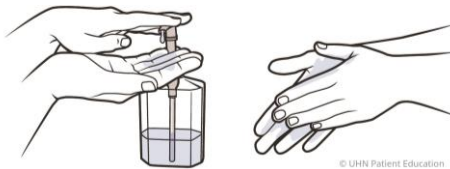
7. Clean your hands after putting on your mask.



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How to take off your mask safely

1. Clean your hands before touching the mask or your face.



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2. Hold the ear loops and lift the mask away from your face.



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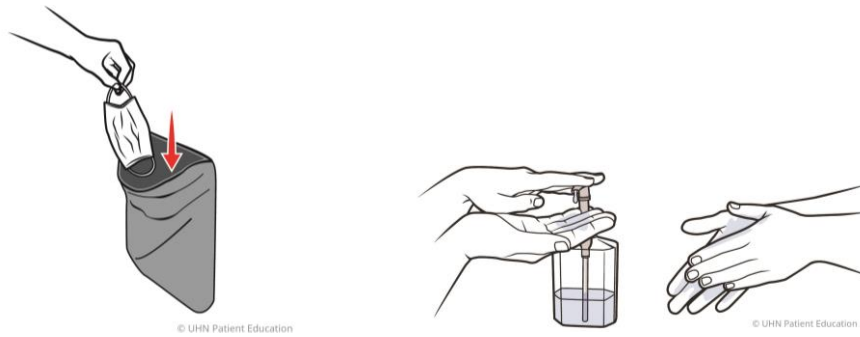


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Do not touch your face or the front of the mask while removing it

3. Put the mask in the garbage and clean your hands again.



What do I do when I get home?

The most important thing to do is to **self-isolate**. Self-isolate means to stay at home and avoid contact with others. Do not leave your home unless it is to see a health care provider.

Self-isolating stops the spread of germs and prevents others from getting sick. Your health care team will give you Public Health Ontario's [How to self-isolate fact sheet](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-how-to-self-isolate.pdf?la=en) (<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-how-to-self-isolate.pdf?la=en>) for instructions on how to self-isolate.

How long do I have to self-isolate for?

The length of time you need to self-isolate depends on your vaccination status, age, and the type of care you received at the hospital and whether you have a weak immune system.

If you were mild to moderately ill (did not stay in the Intensive Care Unit) AND you do not have a weak immune system

You can stop self-isolating when:

- It has been 5 days or more since your symptoms started

AND

- Your fever has stopped on its own (you did not take any medications for it) for at least 24 hours;

AND

- You have not had any gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea) for at least 48 hours;

AND

- Any other symptoms you have are improving.

If you were seriously ill (stayed in the Intensive Care Unit) OR you have a weak immune system

You can stop self-isolating when:

- It has been 10 days or more since your symptoms started

AND

- Your fever has stopped on its own (you did not take any medications for it) for at least 24 hours;

AND

- You have not had any gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea) for at least 48 hours;

AND

- Any other symptoms you have are improving.

If you do not have symptoms

If you are fully vaccinated (has been at least 14 days since your 2nd dose), self-isolate for 5 days from the day you were tested.

If you have a weak immune system, or you are unvaccinated or only partially vaccinated, self-isolate for 10 days from the day you were tested.

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 (e.g. 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/) (<https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-protect-yourself-others/covid-19-reduce-virus-spread/>) webpage.

If your symptoms are not better after your self-isolation period is over, continue to self-isolate and contact the Connected COVID Care Virtual Clinic:

- Phone: 437 488 1650
- Email: COVIDcare@uhn.ca

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

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

- All household members, regardless of vaccination status, will need to self-isolate while you are self-isolating. This is due to how easily COVID-19 can spread when you are in a shared living space.
 - For instructions on how to self-isolate, visit Public Health Ontario's [How to self-isolate fact sheet](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-how-to-self-isolate.pdf?la=en) (<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-how-to-self-isolate.pdf?la=en>).

- If your household members develop symptoms, they should follow the [self-isolation guidelines](#) and get tested, if eligible to do so. You can read more about self-isolation guidelines starting on page 2 of our [What Does My Test Result Mean? brochure](#). If their symptoms worsen, they can call our Connected COVID-19 Care Virtual Clinic at 437 488 1650 for an appointment.
- They will need to prepare your home to avoid spreading the virus. If possible, before you get home, they need to:
 - Make sure there is soap at home for hand washing.
 - Get masks to cover the nose and mouth and wear them when they are close to you.
 - Set up a separate bedroom and bathroom for you if possible.

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

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 for 10 days. This includes if you test positive on a PCR 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.

Some close contacts are considered to be at higher risk for exposure if you were with them when you were most contagious.

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;
- Anyone else that public health advises you may be a close contact.

Let them know that you have tested positive for COVID-19 and that they need to self-monitor for symptoms and follow public health guidelines for their situation (e.g. their age, vaccination status, their place of work).

Some guidelines include:

- Non-household contacts are required to **self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days**, but do not need to isolate.
- If leaving home, they should wear a mask, maintain physical distancing and follow all other public health measures.
- **They should NOT visit any highest risk settings.** This includes hospitals, long-term care or retirement homes, congregate living settings.
- They should also NOT visit with any health care workers providing care to immunocompromised people, or those who may be at higher risk of illness (e.g., seniors) for 10 days from their last exposure to you.
- Report their exposure to their employer and follow any work restrictions.

- If they develop any symptoms, self-isolate immediately, get tested if eligible to do so, and follow the isolation guidelines for their situation.

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

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

Take these actions:

1. Contact the Connected COVID Care Virtual Clinic:

- Phone: 437 488 1650
- Email: 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.

Who will follow up with me after I leave the hospital?

The Connected COVID Care Virtual Clinic will follow up with you if you have tested positive for COVID-19 **or** you have symptoms of COVID-19.

The Clinic will **not** follow up with you if you tested negative **and** do not have symptoms.

When will the Connected COVID Care Virtual Clinic follow up with me?

1. After you leave the hospital, you will receive a check-in call the next business day between 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.
2. You will be scheduled for a virtual appointment with a nurse practitioner and/or doctor. This appointment will happen anywhere from 1 to 5 days after you leave the hospital.

For more information about virtual appointments, please refer to the [Virtual Visits at UHN](https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health_Information/Health_Topics/Documents/Virtual_Visits_at_UHN.pdf) (https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health_Information/Health_Topics/Documents/Virtual_Visits_at_UHN.pdf).

You can access your appointment details through the [myUHN Patient Portal](http://www.myuhn.ca) (www.myuhn.ca) secure website as soon as your appointment is booked.

If you have questions or concerns about your symptoms, call the Connected COVID Care Virtual Clinic to request an appointment with a doctor:

- Phone: 437 488 1650
- Email: COVIDcare@uhn.ca

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

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 using the information below if you need information on mental health support services.

211 Ontario

211 is a telephone helpline and online database of Ontario's community and social services. The service is free and confidential. It is available whenever you need support.

- Do you feel overwhelmed or anxious about COVID-19? Do you want information on mental health services to manage those feelings?
- Do you have money needs because of self-isolation measures?
- Do you have questions about applying for Employment Insurance?
- Do you need help getting groceries or running errands while you are at home sick or self-isolating?

211 calls, chats and emails are answered by caring and professional staff who can help you understand and access programs available to you.

- **Speak with them by phone.** Dial 2-1-1 on your cell phone or home phone. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and in 150 languages.
- **Chat with them online.** Visit [211 Ontario](http://www.211ontario.ca) (www.211ontario.ca) and click the 'Live Chat' button. Available 7am to 9pm Monday to Friday.

- **Search their online listing.** Visit [211 Ontario](http://www.211ontario.ca) (www.211ontario.ca) and search by location and topic. New programs, services and financial supports are added regularly.

Where can I get more information on COVID-19?

For the most up-to-date information:

- visit the [Toronto Public Health COVID-19](https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/) website (https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/)
- visit the [UHN COVID-19](https://www.uhn.ca/covid19) website (https://www.uhn.ca/covid19)