This guidance is for people with disabilities or serious chronic health conditions and their household members and caregivers. It has information that will help you avoid becoming infected and help all of us slow the spread of COVID-19 in Los Angeles County.

People with COVID-19 can have a wide range of symptoms – there are people who have no symptoms, people who have symptoms that feel like a cold or the flu, and people who are very sick and need to go to the hospital. At its most extreme, COVID-19 can cause death. While symptoms can vary from person to person, people with chronic conditions, including heart, lung and kidney disease and diabetes, and those with a weak immune system, are at higher risk of serious illness if they become infected. People with disabilities that affect lung function may be at even higher risk.

**INDIVIDUAL & CAREGIVER PROTECTION AT HOME**

Below are steps you can take to prevent infection or, if you do have signs of illness, manage your care at home. As a caregiver, you can work with your client or household member to act on these steps.

- First, stay at home as much as possible! The best way to keep from getting COVID-19 is to limit contact with people who may carry the virus and avoid places where there are large numbers of people who could be infected. If there is no way to avoid going out, make sure to stay six feet away from other people. Be careful to avoid anyone who shows signs of being sick, since the virus is spread through respiratory drops. But remember that many people can be infected and have no symptoms. So be careful to keep at least six feet from anyone else.

- Carry hand sanitizer when you are out and use it regularly. It may be possible to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes. This is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads but it is a risk. If you touch any surfaces while you are out, try to find a place to wash your hands with soap and water for twenty seconds. If you can’t do that, use hand sanitizer. Be careful not to touch your face when you are outside your home. In fact, it’s best to wash your hands before touching your face wherever you are.

1. Second, be sure you have everything you need to take care of your health needs. These are things you need all the time, but it is especially important to make sure they are in place now.
   - Make sure you have a Personal Emergency Plan. You can find a very simple workbook designed for people with chronic conditions or disabilities, including developmental disabilities, put out by the California Department of Developmental Services at DDS.CA.Gov/FeelingSafeBeingSafe. The plan will help you get the care you need if your regular caregiver gets sick or has to be at home to care
for family members. It will also help if you become sick with COVID-19 or face any other emergency. Make sure to keep it updated with current information about:

- How to reach your health care providers, including specialists and therapists. It should include any 24/7 links provided by your health care provider or health plan in case you need care in an emergency;
- Contact information for the pharmacy you use;
- Contact information for friends and family who should be notified if anything happens to you;
- Other services you rely on, such as meals programs, care coordinators or telehealth services.

- Make plans to get the care you need from any critical out-of-home medical services, such as dialysis, infusion, blood treatment or chemotherapy centers. If you need to go out to receive these services, make sure you have a transportation plan that allows you to get there without extra risk of being exposed to the virus. If you use public transportation, avoid going at busy times. You can get updates about Los Angeles buses and trains during the COVID-19 outbreak at [https://www.metro.net/](https://www.metro.net/). The County’s Access program ([https://accessla.org/ridingaccess/overview.html#](https://accessla.org/ridingaccess/overview.html#)) is also a good resource for transportation assistance.

- Keep durable medical equipment in good condition. Make sure all equipment is working and is being used following product instructions. Know where to call if you have equipment problems. Also, make sure you have plenty of non-durable medical supplies.

2. Limit close contact with people other than your caregiver(s) as much as you can. If possible, even household members should stay at least 6 feet away. Try to avoid sharing items such as cell phones, TV remotes, utensils or other kitchen or household items. Also avoid touching light switches, doorknobs, appliance doors, and other household surfaces that have been touched by other people. Wash your hands or use sanitizer after any contact with a shared surface.

3. If you have one or more caregivers to help around the house or with personal care, they must be very careful not to bring the virus into your house. That means they must be careful about their own health. If they have any symptoms of illness, and if you have an alternate caregiver, they should stay home.

Caregiver(s) should always wear disposable gloves and a face mask whenever they are in close contact with you - even if they don’t feel or look sick. Be careful to wipe down surfaces that you both touch. Use household cleaners and EPA-registered disinfectants following label instructions. Labels have instructions for safe use of the cleaning product, such as wearing gloves and making sure there is good airflow during use. The Department of Public Health (DPH) has posted guidelines for cleaning that you can use at [http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/#homecleaning](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/#homecleaning).

4. Have food and groceries delivered to your home if you can. Several grocery chains have delivery services and many restaurants also offer food delivery. If you are over 60 or have limited mobility, you may be eligible for home-delivered meals from Meals on Wheels ([see Meals on Wheels](https://www.mealsonwheels.com)) or the Los Angeles County Area Agency on Aging ([see LA County Aging Services](https://www.aging.lacounty.gov/)).
Guidance for Individuals with Disabilities and Chronic Conditions and Caregivers

Make sure that food items are left outside your door to avoid having direct, face-to-face contact. Be sure to use online payment when possible.

If you need help carrying delivered items, ask the delivery person to bring them in. Make sure they give you time to step away while they carry the item(s) in and stay 6 feet away from them while they are in your home. Be sure to keep the visit short and clean any surface they may have touched after it is over.

IF YOU DEVELOP SYMPTOMS THAT MAY BE DUE TO COVID-19

5. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include: fever, cough, shortness of breath or trouble breathing, chills, feeling tired, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, stuffy or runny nose, or new loss of taste or smell. This list of symptoms is not complete. If you have other symptoms that worry you, do not assume they can’t be due to COVID-19.

6. If you get symptoms that might be due to COVID-19, stay at home and call your doctor about the need for testing and isolation. If you have mild symptoms, you should be able to recover at home. Do not go to the doctor’s office without calling first. For more information, visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidcare.

7. If you have COVID-19, your usual home care instructions may need to change to meet your needs. Basic instructions are:
   • Rest, drink fluids, and manage symptoms with over-the-counter medications. Be sure to follow the label instructions. Talk to your doctor about any other steps that are important to manage COVID-19 symptoms while dealing with your ongoing health needs.
   • People with COVID-19 must self-isolate (staying away from others) at home for at least 10 days from when symptoms first started and for 1 day (24 hours) after there is no fever (without using fever-reducing medicine) and symptoms have improved. For more information, visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation. If you require a caregiver, self-isolation may not be possible for you. If that is the case, both you and your caregiver must be extra careful about following the guidance mentioned here.

8. If your symptoms worsen while you are home, for example, if your shortness of breath is getting worse, or you have chest tightness or feel confused, contact your doctor right away. You may need to be cared for in a hospital. If hospital care is needed, your doctor, a family member or a caregiver can call 9-1-1 to ask for ambulance transport.

   If you are having trouble breathing, feel pain or pressure in your chest, have bluish lips or face or are experiencing a new onset of confusion or trouble waking up, call 9-1-1 or go to an emergency room immediately.

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND THEIR CAREGIVERS IN STAFFED FACILITIES

The guidance above also apply to staffed facilities. Care should be aimed at minimizing your risk through physical distancing and infection control. DPH has detailed instructions for people who manage all kinds of group living programs (see the web page for Community Care Facilities and the web page for Skilled Nursing
Facilities). These webpages are for the facilities, but you should be aware of the guidelines they list so you can make sure they are followed.

**KNOW WHERE TO GET RELIABLE INFORMATION**

It is very important to know where to get true information about how to avoid getting COVID-19 or take care of yourself if you get sick. Visit the Department of Public Health coronavirus website: [ph.lacounty.gov/Coronavirus](http://ph.lacounty.gov/Coronavirus) for more COVID-19 guidance’s and factsheets.

**DEALING WITH STRESS**

When you hear, read, or watch news about COVID-19, it is normal to feel anxious and overwhelmed. It is also hard for all of us to live within the limits required to keep us safe. It is important to care for your mental as well as your physical health. The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health’s [COVID-19 webpage](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) and the 211 webpage ([211la.org/resources/subcategory/mental-health](http://211la.org/resources/subcategory/mental-health)) have local resources for mental health & wellbeing concerns. Guidance and resources are also available on the CDC webpage, [Coping with Stress](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html).

LA County residents have free access to [Headspace Plus](https://www.headspace.com). This is a collection of mindfulness and meditation resources in English and Spanish. It also has movement and sleep exercises to help manage stress, fear, and anxiety related to COVID-19.

If you want to speak with someone about your mental health, contact your doctor or the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Access Center 24/7 Helpline at 1-800-854-7771.

If you have questions and would like to speak to someone, call the Los Angeles County Information line 2-1-1, which is available 24 hours a day. You can also text “LA” to 74174.