

Act Now Foundation: COVID-19 and Caregivers

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As we are all closely watching what is happening with coronavirus, it is important that caregivers and people living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are taking care of themselves and being proactive to stay healthy. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), most people in the United States have a low risk for catching the coronavirus. However, it's always a good idea to be prepared, especially if you are a caregiver for someone with Alzheimer's or another dementia. Whether your loved one lives at home or in a facility, you may have concerns about the coronavirus. Older adults and those with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk for serious illness. However, recommendations for your person with dementia include:

- Keep in mind that safety precautions given to the general public — such as washing hands, etc. — should be approached differently if caring for someone living with dementia.
- It's important not to panic or to alarm your person with dementia, who can pick up on your emotions, even if they don't understand the reasons behind them.
- If they have heard or read something in the news, offer reassurance that you are working on ways to keep them safe and healthy.
- There is no need to discuss the virus with your person with dementia unless they start a conversation.
- However, it is important to always keep a close eye on good hygiene practices like hand washing, and repeat reminders – try to be as patient as you can.

Here are some practical ways to help lower your chances of getting coronavirus and help keep your family safe:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. Try singing "Happy Birthday" two times to make sure you are washing your hands long enough.
- Keep alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) with you. If you can't wash your hands with soap and water, use hand sanitizer.
- Try to not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and throw the tissue in the trash. Don't reuse tissues.
- Clean and disinfect things that are often touched. It is okay to use regular household cleaning sprays or wipes.
- Stay at home as much as possible.

Make sure you have several weeks of medications and supplies in case you need to stay home for a long period of time.

- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, try to stay away from people, and wash your hands often.
- Avoid crowds; the more people you are around, the more likely you can catch something.
- Check with the facility to make sure that they are keeping up to date on the latest health measures that need to be taken in group living spaces and follow their rules.
- Don't forget that even though you may be more worried now than usual, it is important to find moments of relaxation and enjoyment in the day. Listen to music, watch a favorite movie, or connect with others by phone or on the computer.
- If you or the person you're caring for become sick, call your doctor or healthcare provider and ask them what you should do. Going to the doctor for a regular cold may not be the best thing for an older person.
- Finally, learn more about the disease from accurate and factual news sources and try not to get caught up in social media rumors:
 - o The CDC site has the most recent information.
 - o Sign up for the Administration for Community Living updates (organization that supports older adults) in language that might be easier to understand.

We are monitoring the situation and will change our precautions as recommended by the CDC.

Please note our doors are still open. If you have any questions or need any assistance, please contact us at 201-721-6721 or email Kristine Allen at kallen@actnowfoundation.org | Cary Lopez at clopez@actnowfoundation.org | Stacy Hutsell at shutsell@actnowfoundation.org