

Helpful tips for family caregivers

Living day-to-day in the context of coronavirus

Keep calm and stay in balance



This is a time of great uncertainty. It's natural to feel a wide range of emotions, including fear, anxiety, confusion, or loneliness. It is also a time to take extra care to address your feelings and keep them from paralyzing or overwhelming you.

Get the facts. Our emotional responses come from the part of our brain that specializes in survival and gives us extra

energy to fight or flee. Very useful! But we need the thinking part of our brain to take charge and analyze the facts for a balanced, healthy perspective. Use reliable sources of information, such as the Centers for Disease Control ([coronavirus.gov](http://bit.ly/2WtJm2L)) and your local health department (<http://bit.ly/2WtJm2L>).

Give yourself a sensible media diet. Limit the amount of time you consume news each day. Avoid sensational sources that concentrate on what's going wrong. Feed yourself information that is empowering (what you can do). Verify anything you hear on social media, even from friends.

Focus on what you can do. We are most afraid when things feel out of control. While a global pandemic may feel overwhelming, we do have tremendous power to limit this virus with simple, individual actions, such as handwashing and social distancing.

Stay safely connected with friends and family. It's good to share your feelings. AND make sure to talk about topics besides Covid-19. If you are "sheltering at home," use the phone, texting, email, and social media to stay connected. If you have access to FaceTime, Skype, or Google Hangouts, use them! Video visiting is a good alternative to in-person interaction.

Take care of your body. Eat wisely and pay attention to getting good, sound sleep. Avoid caffeine, which is anxiety producing. Take time to exercise, and spend time outdoors. Even "shelter-in-place" communities encourage walking outside. Just maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet from others. Keep up with your medications, especially those for depression and anxiety. Avoid increased use of alcohol and recreational drugs.

Replenish your spirit. Prolonged stress has been shown to compromise the immune system. What do you usually do to manage stress and lift up your spirits? Find time to invest in your mental health—and your resistance to viruses—by specifically scheduling activities that help you feel calm and grounded.

Get help. If you find you are overwhelmed by your feelings and unable to function very well for 2–3 days, seek professional help. If you don't know who to turn to, contact the Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517).



"It's hard to deal with all the changes. But I'm learning that there are things I can do to handle the uncertainty and keep a sense of normalcy in my life."









**888-607-6027,
TOLL-FREE**

The Aging Space supports older adults and their families in Metro West, greater Worcester and the Blackstone Valley. Give us a call at 888-607-6027, toll-free to find out how we can support you.

Cold, flu or coronavirus?



If you sneeze or have a runny nose, should you worry? As it turns out, no. Most likely you've got a cold. No fever? Definitely not coronavirus or the flu. Use this chart to help distinguish between these three viruses.

Symptom	Coronavirus	Cold	Flu
 Fever	Yes	Rare	Yes, high
 Cough	Yes typically dry	Mild-to-moderate	Yes
 Shortness of breath	Yes	Rare	Yes
 Fatigue, weakness	Yes	Mild	Yes
 Headache	Sometimes	Rare	Yes
 Sneezing	No	Common	Sometimes
 Sore throat	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
 Runny or stuffy nose	Rare	Common	Sometimes

If you think you or someone you care for has the coronavirus, check with your doctor or contact your local health department (find your local health department website at <http://bit.ly/2WtJm2L>). People at risk for a serious case—older adults and/or those with heart disease, diabetes, or lung conditions—should be evaluated early, even if symptoms are mild.

Call 911 if you observe these urgent symptoms:

- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- new mental confusion
- inability to stay alert
- bluish lips or face

Cleaning and disinfecting

The coronavirus appears to be able to live on surfaces for several hours to several days. Fortunately, we can do a tremendous amount to stay safe, even if a household member is sick. Here are tips for protecting yourselves.

- **Cleaning** removes germs and dirt from surfaces. Cleaning does not *kill* germs. By removing them, however, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection. Use standard household cleaners, detergent, or soap and water.
- **Disinfecting** uses chemicals that kill germs. It doesn't clean a surface. But by killing the few germs left *after* cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection. Get a list of Covid-19 approved disinfectants at <http://bit.ly/3d8N7hT>. Follow all label instructions.

Make your own disinfectant. If you have bleach that has not yet expired, mix 4 teaspoons with a quart of water. Wear gloves and use in a well-ventilated room. Make a new batch daily. It loses potency after 24 hours.

Focus on high-touch surfaces: tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, counters.

Clean and disinfect daily. Even if no one is sick right now, it will protect everyone in the house from new germs that may have entered from trips outside or home deliveries.

- If a member of the household is sick, he or she should remain in one room with a bathroom for their sole use. Clean their specific room and bathroom on an as-needed basis. Encourage the ill person to do the cleaning. Give them a supply of tissues, paper towels, cleaners, and disinfectants.
- If a bathroom is shared, then cleaning and disinfecting *must* occur after each use by the ill person.

Use disposable gloves while cleaning and disinfecting.

Remove and put them in a lined trash container when done. Then wash your hands with soap and water. If you only have reusable gloves, dedicate a pair for surface cleaning. Wash your hands whenever you touch or remove them.

Contact us at 888-607-6027, toll-free

