Guidance for People at Higher Risk for Serious Illness

People who are older or have underlying health conditions are at higher risk for complications from COVID-19. (See Are You at Higher Risk for Severe Illness? to learn more about who is at higher risk). We care about you and your loved ones—see below for some guidance about what to do during the COVID-19 outbreak.

- Practice good health habits including:
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
  - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
  - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
  - Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces every day.
  - Stay home as much as possible. If you go out, keep 6 feet of distance between yourself and others.
  - Avoid sharing personal household items. You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.

- Make sure you can contact your regular healthcare provider when you need advice. Some clinics use “patient portals” to communicate and most of them will have staff that can take your calls to give advice. Please keep in mind that they are likely very busy.

- Make a list of medicines you need regularly and ask your pharmacy or healthcare provider if you can have an extra supply or prescription. Keep track of any other medications or supplements that you take and monitor your current health conditions as directed.

- Keep up-to-date with your immunizations.

- Identify someone who can help you and ask them to check up on you over the phone to make sure you are okay. Make sure that they understand not to visit if they are not feeling well.

- Make sure you have enough food and personal hygiene supplies to last a while.
• If you have a caregiver, they should also take special precautions. (See Information for Families Caring for Loved Ones on our Health Education page. Available in several languages.)

**Monitor your health**

• Write down any symptoms you have.
  
  o Record your temperature. Some medications can lower your body temperature, including aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid), Tylenol® (acetaminophen), Motrin® or Advil® (ibuprofen), Aleve® (naproxen). If you are taking one of these medications, please take your temperature before your next dose of medication.

• Call your healthcare provider before going to the clinic or hospital.
  
  o Calling first will help the clinic or hospital prepare to greet you and take care of you in the safest possible way. It may be recommended that you stay home and monitor your symptoms.

• Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (for example, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing).
  
  o Before seeking care, call your healthcare provider.
  
  o Put on a facemask that covers your nose and mouth before you enter any facility or emergency vehicle. After you put on the facemask, clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

• If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, separate yourself from other people and animals in your home.
  
  o As much as possible, you should stay in one room and away from other people in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available.
  
  o Restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19, just like you would around people. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus. (See COVID-19 and Animals for more information).

**More COVID-19 Information and Resources**

Stay up-to-date on the current COVID-19 situation in Washington, Governor Inslee’s proclamations, symptoms, how it spreads, and how and when people should get tested. See our Frequently Asked Questions for more information.

The risk of COVID-19 is not connected to race, ethnicity or nationality. Stigma will not help to fight the illness. Share accurate information with others to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

• WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak (COVID-19)
Have more questions about COVID-19? Call our hotline: **1-800-525-0127**. For interpretative services, press # when they answer and say your language. (Open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.) For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact your health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.