

COVID-19



FEDERAL MINISTRY OF HEALTH



NIGERIA CENTRE FOR DISEASE CONTROL

# Advisory for Vulnerable Groups

(THE ELDERLY AND  
THOSE WITH PRE-EXISTING  
MEDICAL CONDITIONS)

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## ADVISORY FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

The novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) is a new strain of the virus that has not been previously identified in humans. SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

This is an advisory on COVID-19 for people who are deemed vulnerable, because they are at a considerably higher risk of having complications from the disease. It is important that people with underlying health immuno-compromised conditions take extra precautions to protect themselves, due to their weakened immune system which puts them at a higher risk of infection.

This advisory will be updated frequently to reflect new information and research emerging on the disease and its impact on vulnerable populations.

### Who is vulnerable?

Based on current knowledge of the disease, the following category of people are considered vulnerable and at high-risk of complications from COVID-19;

- Persons aged **50 years and older** (with or without underlying illnesses)
- Persons with **critical underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, cancer, lung disease, liver disease, moderate to severe asthma** etc.
- Other persons who have been assessed as **vulnerable**, based on clinical assessment

### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- Cough
- Shivering /shaking (chills)
- Body pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Recent loss of taste or smell
- Difficulty in breathing/shortness of breath
- Diarrhoea/abdominal pain
- Runny nose/catarrh
- Fatigue (tiredness)

### How is COVID-19 transmitted?

The spread of COVID-19 is most likely to happen when there is close contact (less than **2 metres**) with an infected person. The risk increases the longer one has close contact with an infected person.

There are two routes by which people could become infected:

- Secretions can be directly transferred into the mouths or noses of people who are nearby (within **2 metres**) or could be inhaled into the lungs
- It is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface or object such as a doorknob that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions, and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes

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### How do I protect myself from COVID-19?

If you or a loved one is in the category of vulnerable populations, there is a higher risk of complications from a COVID-19 infection. However, there are measures that can be taken to limit possible infection. These include:

- Using non-contact greetings (even with family members)
- Washing your hands regularly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based sanitizer, if no water and soap is available
- Avoiding contact with anyone who is showing symptoms of COVID-19
- Avoiding non-essential outings and visitors. If you must go out, always wear a face mask in public and maintain at least **2 metres** (5 feet) of physical distance between yourself and other individuals
- Ensure you have an adequate supply of the medication needed to manage your condition while you stay at home
- If possible, consider having your medicines, groceries and essential items delivered to your home by a designated family member, friend, or delivery person who complies with recommended measures including physical distancing, face mask use and frequent hand hygiene.
- Avoiding large gatherings and crowded spaces such as open markets, crowded supermarkets, and pharmacies
- If you have to work, discussing and agreeing your options with your employer to enable you work from home or make changes within the office space to keep you and your colleagues protected

### Staying protected when living with others

In addition to the aforementioned preventive measures, the following are important if you live in a shared house or flat:

- Ensure that if you do share a toilet and bathroom with others, they are cleaned after each use. Where possible, consider drawing up a rota for bathing, and you use the bathroom first at the start of each day
- Encourage frequent handwashing with soap and water by all other household members and disinfect frequently touched surfaces e. g door handles, light switches, TV remotes etc. throughout the day
- Keep shared spaces well ventilated and minimise the time spent in shared enclosed spaces, such as kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas
- Where possible, sleep in a different bed and endeavour to maintain physical distancing even within the household
- Do not share towels and beddings or use commonly shared household items including cutlery, drinking cups etc.

### What should you do if you develop symptoms of COVID-19?

Immediately call your [state helpline](#) and a close family member if you develop symptoms of COVID-19, or believe you have been a close contact of a confirmed case. The State Ministry of Health supported by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) will arrange for sample collection, testing and

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communicate results. Please avoid self-medication.

If you live alone, it is important that you keep a folder on your medical condition (if any), with emergency contact details, blood genotype, blood group, a list of the medications you are taking (including dose and frequency) and details of any medication you might react adversely to.

If your COVID-19 test comes out positive, your care should be managed in a designated state health facility, enabling your health to be constantly monitored, especially if you have an underlying health condition.

### What can you do to keep your spirits up during this period?

Your emotional and mental health is important, as sometimes you may feel stressed, lonely or anxious. However, it is important that you stay safe to protect yourself and your loved ones. Below are some recommended activities:

- Spend time in open areas when there are fewer people around
- Use support you might have through your friends, family and other networks to share your highs and lows
- If you live alone, use your phone, teleconferencing platforms etc. to stay socially connected
- Ensure you stay physically active, staying hydrated and eat a healthy diet with fruit and vegetables
- Use your medications as prescribed by your doctor and make arrangements with your health facility to ensure your routine/essential medical appointments are not disrupted

### How do I stay safe if I am caring for a vulnerable person?

If you are caring for a vulnerable person, ensure you also take adequate measures to reduce the risk of getting infected or infecting the person you are caring for. Some of the measures you can take include:

- Wearing a face mask if caring for a person with a chronic medical condition
- Washing your hands regularly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based sanitizer, if no soap and water is available
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or use your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Dispose used tissue in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- Whenever possible, maintain physical distance of at least **2 metres (5feet)**, when personal contact is not necessary
- Staying home if you are unwell or are a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case. If within the same household, adhere strictly to [self-isolation guidelines](#)
- Reducing the need to go out as much as possible, and when you go out maintaining a physical distance from others, ensuring you wear a face mask
- Being a caregiver may be stressful. Ensure to look after your mental and physical wellbeing