

Home Isolation for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

This document is intended for health care providers and returned travellers, who have been advised to home isolate, and persons who have been in close contact with someone known to have COVID-19.

What is home isolation?

Home isolation is when you are required to remain at home because you have a respiratory infection, including novel coronavirus, that can be spread to other people. Other people who may need home isolation are persons who may have been exposed because of travel or close contacts. If you are unsure if home isolation applies to you, please call your local public health services.

Home isolation can help prevent the spread of infections, such as novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). More importantly, staying home means that if you do start to feel sick, you won't run the risk of this happening while you are in a public place. Home isolation is a cautious action used to lower the chance that the virus could spread to others.

What are the restrictions while I am on home isolation?

Stay home. You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to social gatherings, work, school/university, child care, athletic events, faith-based gatherings, healthcare facilities, grocery stores, restaurants, shopping malls, and any public gatherings and do not use public transportation or taxis.

You cannot visit other people in their homes or have visitors in your home but it is okay for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food or other things you may need.

You can also use delivery or pick up services for errands such as grocery shopping

What should I do while I am on home isolation?

- Separate yourself from other people in your home; as much as possible, you should stay/sleep in a different room and use a separate bathroom from other people. If this is not possible, you should keep a distance of two metres from other people in your home.
- If you need to attend a medical appointment, please wear a mask (if available) and inform your local Public Health, the medical office staff, and all health care providers, including paramedics, that you have or may have novel coronavirus and are on home isolation. Travel in a private vehicle if possible. If a private vehicle is not available, a private hired vehicle (e.g., taxi, Uber) may be used while wearing a mask and sitting in the rear passenger seat with the window open (weather permitting). If possible, you should also note the taxi company name and operator number in case Ottawa Public Health has to follow-up with potential contacts.
- Shared rooms and bathrooms should be well ventilated (e.g., keep window open if possible).
- Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; dry with paper towels. If this is not possible, use a dedicated cloth towel that is kept separate from everyone else's towels
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available and hands look clean.
- Avoid sharing household items; you should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other items with other people in your home.
- Thoroughly wash all household items with soap and warm water after use.
- **If you are sick**, wear a mask when you are in the same room with other people and when you visit a health care provider; if you cannot wear a mask, the people who live with you should wear one while they are in the same room with you.
- Change your mask once it becomes moist and wash your hands, before and after handling it.
- Have tissues beside or with you at all times so you can cover cough, sneezes or to wipe or blow your nose. Cover your coughs or sneezes with a tissue or your arm, not your hand. Throw used tissues and masks in a plastic-lined covered trash can, and immediately wash your hands with soap and water.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or wear a mask while receiving care (assistance with feeding, drinking, taking medications, dressing, bathing, toileting, repositioning in bed).

What about my family members and roommates?

If Public Health is calling you or you have called Public Health, the public health nurse will talk to you about medical follow-up for your family members, roommates and other people that have been in contact with you recently. It is important to tell the nurse about all the people that you have had close contact with so they can be referred appropriately.

The only people in the household should be those who are essential for providing your care:

- People who are not providing you care should make arrangements to live somewhere else until home isolation is no longer needed. If this is not possible, they should stay in another room or be separated from you as much as possible.
- Persons living with you or caregivers should avoid other types of possible exposure to your contaminated items. For example, they should avoid sharing toothbrushes, cigarettes, eating utensils, drinks, towels, washcloths or bed linen.

Household Cleaning and Disinfection

- Clean all “high-touch” areas such as counters, toilets, sink tap handles, tabletops, doorknobs TV remotes, phones, and bedside tables daily using regular household cleaners.
- Clean more often if surfaces become visibly soiled.
- Clean any surfaces that may have blood, body fluids and/or secretions on them.
- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning surfaces.
- Use a diluted bleach solution (2 teaspoons of bleach to 4 cups of water) or household disinfectant.
- Dishes and eating utensils should be cleaned with dish soap and hot water after each use.
- Use of a dishwasher with a drying cycle also provides a sufficient level of cleaning.

Laundry

- Clothing and bedclothes can be cleaned using regular laundry soap and water and do not require separation from other household laundry.
- If clothing or bedding have blood, body fluids and/or secretions, wear disposable gloves while handling soiled items, remove gloves and wash hands immediately afterwards.

Waste Management

- All waste generated can be bagged in a regular plastic bag and disposed of in regular household waste.

How long will I be on home isolation?

The length of isolation depends on the results of your laboratory tests and the period of time when you can spread the infection to another person. A public health nurse will tell you when you no longer need to be on home isolation. For novel coronavirus, home isolation is usually 14 days however, this may be longer if you have been ill as you may still be infectious or if you were tested and are waiting for the results.