# How do I prepare for my home care visits during COVID-19?

Physical/Social Distancing
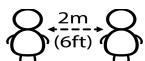
Physical distancing means keeping our distance from one another and limiting activities outside the home. When outside your home, it means **staying at least 2 meters (or 6 feet) away from other people** whenever possible.

When a healthcare worker visits your home, you can help promote physical/social distancing by making sure your family is in another room. If you do need a support person, then this should be limited to one (1) person who should stay at least 2 meters from the healthcare worker, unless care requires closer contact (e.g. 2 person lift).

Masks

As of May 4, 2020, all Home and Community Healthcare Workers have to follow universal masking rules. This means that any visiting worker coming into your home, must wear a procedure/surgical mask at all times during the home visit. The healthcare workers will bring their own procedure/surgical mask. Patients do not need to supply masks or any other protective equipment to visiting healthcare workers. Patients and their support person may choose to wear masks they have made or obtained themselves. This is especially important to consider for close contact activities. It is also important to learn how to wear a mask.

Self-Screening
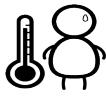
Healthcare workers entering your home will ask you a few questions to help understand if you and your family and friends are feeling healthy and well. Your answers help the healthcare worker to know what personal protective equipment, often referred to as PPE (e.g. mask, gloves, gowns and goggles), they need to bring in order to complete care safely and to let you know what to do if you feel unwell.

Healthcare workers also complete a self-check before the beginning of their shift. The self-check makes sure that the health care workers are healthy and ready to provide care to patients. If a health care worker feels unwell before or during their work shift, they have to let their manager know and return home. Sick healthcare workers are never to provide care to patients.

Between visits, you and your family can also do your own self-checks anytime. On-line websites or Tools like the Canada COVID19 application, and the Ontario COVID-19 self assessment are available.

Ontario

Hand Hygiene

Clean hands are the best way to prevent infections. Use soap and water. If soap and water are not available, you can use a 70% alcohol hand rub to wash your hands. **Hand Sanitizer will not work if your hands are visibly dirty or not clean. You must wash your hands with soap and water instead.** The alcohol in hand sanitizer does not work if there are things like bodily fluids, food, and/or dirt present. The action of washing, rinsing and drying is the most important way to remove bacteria or germs that might be present.

Other good tips include:
- Making sure family and visitors wash or sanitize their hands when entering and leaving your home, and before providing care or preparing meals.
- Asking healthcare workers if they have cleaned their hands before helping you.
- Coughing into your elbow or a tissue instead of your hand. Throw out the tissue and wash your hands

All healthcare workers entering and leaving your home must wash their hands or use hand sanitizer. If you did not see the healthcare worker do this, it is okay to ask them to make sure they did.

Cleaning High Touch Surfaces

Regularly clean things that are touched a lot such as door knobs, handrails, bathroom surfaces (including toilet handles and faucets), light switches, counters, remote control devices, phones and touch screen surfaces. Clean the surfaces with soap and water when you can see that they are dirty. Use household cleaners and disinfectants on appropriate surfaces (check labels).

Virtual Care

As a way of reducing the spread of COVID-19, Home and Community Care is using virtual care, when it fits, so there are less people coming into your home.
Your healthcare team will decide if virtual care is the right option for you based on their clinical judgement and what they know about your care needs.

Virtual care is a way of you communicating with your health care worker without having to physically go in and see them. This way, there is less risk of you coming into contact with people who may be sick. You can connect with them through:
- Phone calls
- Video conferencing –on your computer, laptop or tablet.
- Secure messaging –private and safe email or text.
- Remote monitoring – Telehomecare programs that use special devices that for example, can check your blood pressure or your weight.

If you have any questions or concerns about any of this material or a specific situation in your home, please call:
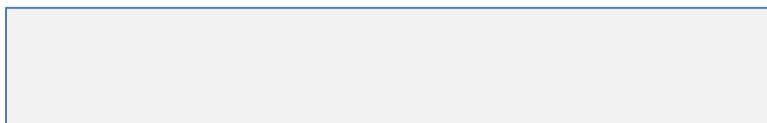
Public Health Ontario resources for patients:

- [Ontario COVID-19 Self Assessment](#) - On-line Questionnaire
- [Canada COVID19 app](#) – application for download
- [How to use hand sanitizer](#) – Video
- [How to hand wash](#) – Video
- [How to wash your hands & use hand sanitizer](#) – Handout
- [Mask use for non-healthcare workers](#) – Handout
- [When and how to wear a mask](#) – Handout
- [How to Put on and Take off a mask](#)- Video
- [Cleaning and disinfecting for public settings](#) – Handout
- [Physical distancing](#) – Handout

If you have COVID-19, or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, here are some additional reading materials.

- [How to self-monitor](#) – Handout
- [How to self-isolate](#) – Handout
- [Self-isolation: Guide for caregivers, household members and close contacts](#) – Handout

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