

KEY MESSAGES FOR NATIONAL SOCIETIES TO ADAPT AND USE

BEFORE USING THESE KEY MESSAGES:

- These key messages aimed at older people have been developed by IFRC following request and consultation from National Societies in Europe.
- They are intended to be used as the basis for communications from National Societies.
- Please adapt and adjust the yellow highlighted section before using this note.
- !!!!!!DELETE ALL YELLOW HIGHLIGHTED TEXT!!!!

Key messages for older people during COVID 19 pandemic

In this document you can find recommendations for older people about COVID-19. It gives basic information about what older people can do to reduce the risk of getting infected with the Coronavirus and what they can do if they need help and support.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Society / branch of [FILL IN NAME OF BRANCH/NS] is working in the community to support people who have concerns about Covid-19. You can contact them on [FILL in CONTACT INFORMATION]

People of all ages can become sick with COVID–19. People older than 65, and people who already have other illnesses (e.g. diabetes, heart problems, or cancer, respiratory diseases, people with low immunity) are more likely to get more seriously sick with COVID-19.

What is COVID-19 and how can it spread?

- COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new type of “coronavirus” that appeared in December 2019.
- People who catch the virus commonly have a fever, ongoing dry cough and a shortness of breath. Some people have other symptoms like a nasal congestion, aching muscles and a sore throat.
- Some people with the virus do not show any symptoms – but may still be contagious.
- There is currently no available treatment or vaccine for COVID-19. However, many of the symptoms can be treated.
- Most people recover well from COVID-19 without needing special treatment.
- COVID-19 can spread from person to person through droplets produced when the infected person coughs or sneezes. It can also spread when a person touches a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth.

I am feeling concerned and worried. What can I do?

Understandably, changes to your daily routine such as not being able to go out as much and limiting contact with friends, family and neighbors, can make you feel sad, stressed, worried or angry and could also affect your sleep. It is important to recognize that these are entirely normal reactions – this is a stressful time for everyone. Some things which could help are:

- Stay in touch regularly with people you trust - family, friends, neighbors and volunteers or contact your local Red Cross Red Crescent. Sharing a chat with a friendly voice can be very helpful.
- Spend time doing the things you enjoy, like reading, cooking, watching tv, doing jigsaws, listening to your favorite radio program or other indoor hobbies.
- Look for exercises you can do at home to stay active like moving around in your home, doing some work, standing up, stretching or simple exercises that you can comfortably do. Do not push yourself to do more than you like. Go slowly. If it hurts–STOP.
- Let fresh air in through the windows. If you can, spend time on your balcony or in your garden

- Get information from trusted sources like your health care provider, the government, your local Red Cross/Red Crescent or the World Health Organisation. Avoid listening to or spreading information that does not come from trusted sources
- If you would like help, contact your local Red Cross/Red Crescent or other community organizations. Remember you don't have to cope alone, there are people who can support you!
- If possible, prepare a separate room or space in your home, in case you or others who live with you may show symptoms of COVID-19 and you need to self-isolate.
- Ask family, friends, neighbors or **your local Red Cross / Red Crescent branch ONLY INCLUDE IF THIS SERVICE IS PROVIDED** if you need support getting groceries or medical supplies.

What does “physical distancing” mean? What should I do?

- “Physical distancing” (sometimes called “social distancing”) means limiting physical contact with other people, and keeping a safe space (about two arm’s lengths) between yourself and other people outside of your home. Avoid shaking hands or hugging people not living with you. Try to find other ways to greet like nodding, waving or smiling.
- This might involve having to change your daily routine. Making these changes could be challenging but are important to help protect yourself and others by slowing the spread of COVID-19.
- At the moment physical distancing is the best defense we have against the spread of the Corona virus infection and adopting these measures can and will help save lives.

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do remain at home as much as possible and only go out if you have to, following the government advice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't attend gatherings of family and friends, such as parties, community events, weddings, religious services or visit community spaces such as parks and beaches or any crowded place. <p>We know this is difficult, but gatherings of people are key times when the COVID 19 is spread.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do limit physical contact with anyone not living with you or taking direct care of you. • If you must go out for essential purposes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ limit outings to early mornings or evenings when there are fewer people around. ○ Keep a distance of at least 2 arm lengths between yourself and other people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't go out for leisure or travel. Limit going out for groceries as much as possible if someone can shop for you.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do arrange for food or medicine to be delivered- ask families, friends or carers for support. [ADD your local Red Cross / Red Crescent branch ONLY INCLUDE IF THIS SERVICE IS PROVIDED] can help you with that. Make sure that deliveries are left at the door to minimize contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't go directly to the doctor or hospital if you have COVID-19 symptoms but call before you go and describe your symptoms. Your health-care provider will tell you what to do next.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do stay in touch with neighbours, friends, family and carers using the phone, internet, or social media. Ask for support if you would like help to use these. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't ask friends, family or carers to visit you, especially if they have symptoms of COVID-19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do keep yourself entertained and informed in your usual way – reading, listening to the radio, watching TV etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't listen and read news updates about COVID-19 all day long – this can become overwhelming.

[IMPORTANT INFORMATION BEFORE USING THIS NOTE]

Please include the next paragraph **only** if your branch / HQ can directly provide support in this area, or can provide referrals to reliable support for older people experiencing violence, abuse or neglect

- During this very unusual time, people may experience increased tension, violence, abuse and neglect. If you're worried that you or someone you live with may be experiencing violence or abuse, call a trusted person and ask for help. Your [ADD your local Red Cross / Red Crescent branch] can support you or the police. **[IMPORTANT: NS ADAPT THIS TEXT FOR YOUR SITUATION – put hotline/police/RCRC numbers as appropriate]**

How can I manage my health?

- If you have any existing health conditions continue taking the medications and following instructions you have been given by your health care provider, even if you have new symptoms related to COVID-19. If having doubts or concerns, contact your health care provider. Be aware: new procedures may be in place to handle increased demand.
- Follow the instructions of public authorities. If in doubt, ask your health care provider for advice. Frequently wash your hands thoroughly for a minimum of 20 seconds with soap and water. Use an alcohol-based sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth as much as possible.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and immediately throw away the tissue. Cough into your elbow if a tissue is not available and wash your hands afterwards
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- To support your immune system, try to eat healthily, maintain regular exercise and avoid smoking and excess alcohol.

- Prepare an up-to-date list of emergency contacts including your family members, medical doctor and others who would need to be contacted in an emergency or if you were taken ill.
- Refill any prescription medication you need to ensure you have enough for at least 30 days if possible
- If you're feeling sad, stressed or worried, try the tips given above.

I am feeling sick and suspect that I have COVID-19, what should I do?

- Stay at home
- Do not panic or hide your condition. Contact your health care provider by telephone or online services if you have:
 - A fever
 - Dry cough
 - Blocked nose
 - General weakness and tiredness
 - Been in contact with someone who you know has COVID-19
- Describe your symptoms to your health care provider. This will help them take care of you and keep other people safe. Also inform the health care provider about any medications you are already taking.
- Seek immediate medical attention if your symptoms get worse and you have any of the emergency warning signs, including:
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
 - Confusion

Information in this guidance is based on advice from the World Health Organisation on COVID-19 as well as guidance and advice from HelpAge International

Further information is available at:

https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

<https://www.helpage.org/what-we-do/covid19-guidance-and-advice-for-older-people>