Older Adults and COVID-19: Staying healthy during this stressful time

Older adults are more likely to react severely to COVID-19, due partly to weaker immune systems and having chronic conditions. Stay informed to stay well!

Maintain emotional well-being
• Continue to talk to family and friends who support you emotionally through telephone or Internet if you cannot see them in person
• Take a break from media, sleep well, go for a walk, and eat well

Make a plan and discuss with family and friends
• Create plans with family and friends for when you or someone you know becomes sick
• Designate an emergency contact and discuss plans with that person

Prepare in case you need to stay home
• Make sure you have access to several weeks of medications and supplies for yourself and people you live with
• Have essential materials like food, toiletries, and pet food to reduce the number of trips you have to make to the stores
• Find out what you can buy online and how; ask family and friends for help if needed

Symptoms to look out for:
• If you develop these symptoms, call your doctor BEFORE going in to take a test
  • Fever, cough, or trouble breathing
• If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19 receive medical attention immediately. These include (not a conclusive list):
  • Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
  • Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
  • New confusion or inability to arouse
  • Bluish lips or face
Some precautions you can take to protect yourself:

- Disinfect frequently used areas and objects with common household disinfectants
- Wash your hands for at least twenty seconds with soap and water or use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol
- Do not touch your eyes, nose and mouth
- Stay home if you start to show symptoms
- Practice physical distancing – avoid traveling into your community unless necessary
- Avoid crowds, highly populated areas and people who are sick

Only use a face mask if you are:

- Showing symptoms - this will help prevent the spread to people around you
- If you are a caretaker or healthcare worker for someone who is showing symptoms

Resources:

- Iowa’s public hotline for questions: Dial 211 or visit 211iowa.org
- University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics: for general COVID-19 information and questions, call 319-384-8829 (for those with symptoms: 319-384-9010)
- Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) COVID-19 webpage: https://idph.iowa.gov/emerging-health-issues/novel-coronavirus
- Iowa Department on Aging: https://www.iowaaging.gov/

Sources:
Administration for Community Living website: https://acl.gov/COVID-19