

## **COVID-19: Social distancing and self-isolation**

### Information for people living with lung disease and lung cancer

Although things have changed somewhat since 2020, it's still easy to become overwhelmed. We dive into the different terms of social distancing and self-isolation, and how you can practice them effectively.

#### **Social distancing**

Some people who have COVID-19 don't display any symptoms and may not even know they have it. That's why maintaining physical distance between yourself, and other people is the most effective way to slow and stop the spread of the virus.

COVID-19 spreads through droplet transmission—the small pieces of saliva produced when a person sneezes or coughs. These droplets don't usually travel further than one metre through the air. To help stop the spread of the virus, the Australian Government introduced a 1.5 metre distancing rule.

Maintaining physical distance, practicing good hand hygiene, and avoiding touching your face are all really important measures every individual needs to take.

#### **Self-isolation**

Self-isolation is still recommended for anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 as staying home protects the people in your community.

If you do test positive, it is recommended that you should not visit 'high-risk settings' like hospitals and aged and disability care settings:

- for at least 7 days or until symptoms have gone
- unless seeking immediate medical care.

Self-isolation means remaining in your home to reduce your risk of spreading the virus or contracting it virus.

#### **How to practice social distancing outside the home**

If you leave your home, try to avoid busy shopping centres and public transport, where possible. Enlist the help of family, friends, or neighbours to pick up any groceries or medications you may need and ask them to leave them outside your house.

When leaving the house, be vigilant about social distancing. Practice good hygiene by frequently and thoroughly washing your hands with soap and warm water. Most specialists are now offering consultations via the telephone or video conference, so talk to your treating doctors about alternative ways to receive consultation.

## Socialising

Try to limit face-to-face socialisation. If any friends or family members suspect they are unwell, kindly ask them to stay away. This includes looking after grandchildren; children can spread a range of respiratory infections and only display mild symptoms. Whilst you may wish to help with taking care of grandchildren, you need to consider whether this is suitable for you.

To stay in touch with family and friends, use other methods to socialise, such as telephone, email, and social media. Be creative; plan to watch a television show at the same time and telephone each other afterwards. You could even organise with family and friends to make contact on different days of the week, so interactions with others are spaced out.

If you are feeling socially isolated, don't wait for someone to contact you, call a friend or a family member and discuss how you are feeling. If you need to talk to someone urgently, Lifeline provides 24-hour crisis telephone counselling on **13 11 14**. If you are experiencing suicidal feelings or thoughts, the Suicide Call Back Service provides 24-hour telephone support on **1300 659 467**. In an emergency or immediate danger, always call Triple Zero (000).

## What to have at home

We have collated a list of items which may make you feel more at ease should you need to stay home for an extended period of time. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends about how they can assist you by purchasing supplies on your behalf to reduce your need to go to places such as busy shopping centres.

Things to have at home:

- An up-to-date Action Plan developed with your treating doctor to help you recognise when symptoms of your condition worsen and steps to manage them.
- An adequate supply of in-date medication— consult with your pharmacist. According to Medicines Australia, there is an adequate supply of medications in Australia to meet community needs, so there is no need to stockpile. Any potential issues relating to supply of essential medications will be addressed if they arise.
- Have current prescriptions for your regular medications on hand.
- If you require oxygen cylinders to manage your condition, contact your supplier and ask them to inform you of their supply and create a plan to continue to deliver oxygen to you during this time.
- A small stock of non-perishable groceries (i.e., canned goods and frozen foods) so you are prepared if you are required to stay at home for an extended period of time, however, it is not necessary to stockpile.
- Supplies to keep your hands (i.e., soap, alcohol-based hand sanitiser) and home (i.e., disinfectant, cleaning cloths) clean.
- Other hygiene items such as toilet paper, tissues, and feminine care products.
- Take note of other medical supplies you may need such as contact lenses, contact solution, hearing-aid batteries, and over-the-counter medicines like pain relief.

## **We're here for you**

Remember our Information and Support Centre staff are available to connect you with resources and support services to help you during this time.

Our Information and Support Centre is open Monday to Friday 8:00am-4:30pm (QLD). To contact us please **freecall 1800 654 301** (option 3).

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