

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

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

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With the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Australia growing every day, the terms social distancing, self-isolation and essential and non-essential activities have become a big part of our day-to-day conversations. But what do these terms really mean, why are they important and how do we 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 important measures every individual needs to take.

#### **Self-isolation**

The Australian Government has updated its advice for people who are required to self-isolate. You must self-isolate for 14 days if; you have COVID-19, you have been in close contact with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 or if you arrived in Australia after midnight on 15 March 2020.

Self-isolation is also recommended for people at an increased risk of serious illness if they contract the virus, as well as the elderly. Self-isolation means remaining in your home to reduce your risk of spreading the virus or contracting it.

#### **Essential and non-essential activities**

The Australian Government recommends everyone remain in their home unless performing essential activities. Essential activities include things like grocery shopping, attending your workplace, purchasing medications or attending medical appointments. It's important to practice social distancing while performing essential activities.

Some things that are non-essential, such as seeing your grandchildren, may feel like an essential activity. Think about other ways you may be able to stay connected. Embrace technology and ask your family and friends to help you set up technology like Facetime or other apps so you can feel connected.

## How to practice social distancing outside the home

If you must leave the home for an essential activity, 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, then 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 for at least 20 seconds. 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. This can be the hardest change to implement, however it is important for people at a higher risk of serious illness to limit the amount of contact you have with others. 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 during this time.

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 know social distancing is the most effective way to slow the spread of COVID-19, however, with panic buying and hoarding rife, you may be feeling confused about what items you should have on hand at this time.

We have collated a list of items which may make you feel more at ease. 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. Also keep an eye on our website and Facebook page for the latest updates, including our home-based exercise series, Maintaining Movement. Our Information and Support Centre is open Monday to Friday 8:00am-4:30pm (AEST). To contact us please freecall **1800 654 301**.