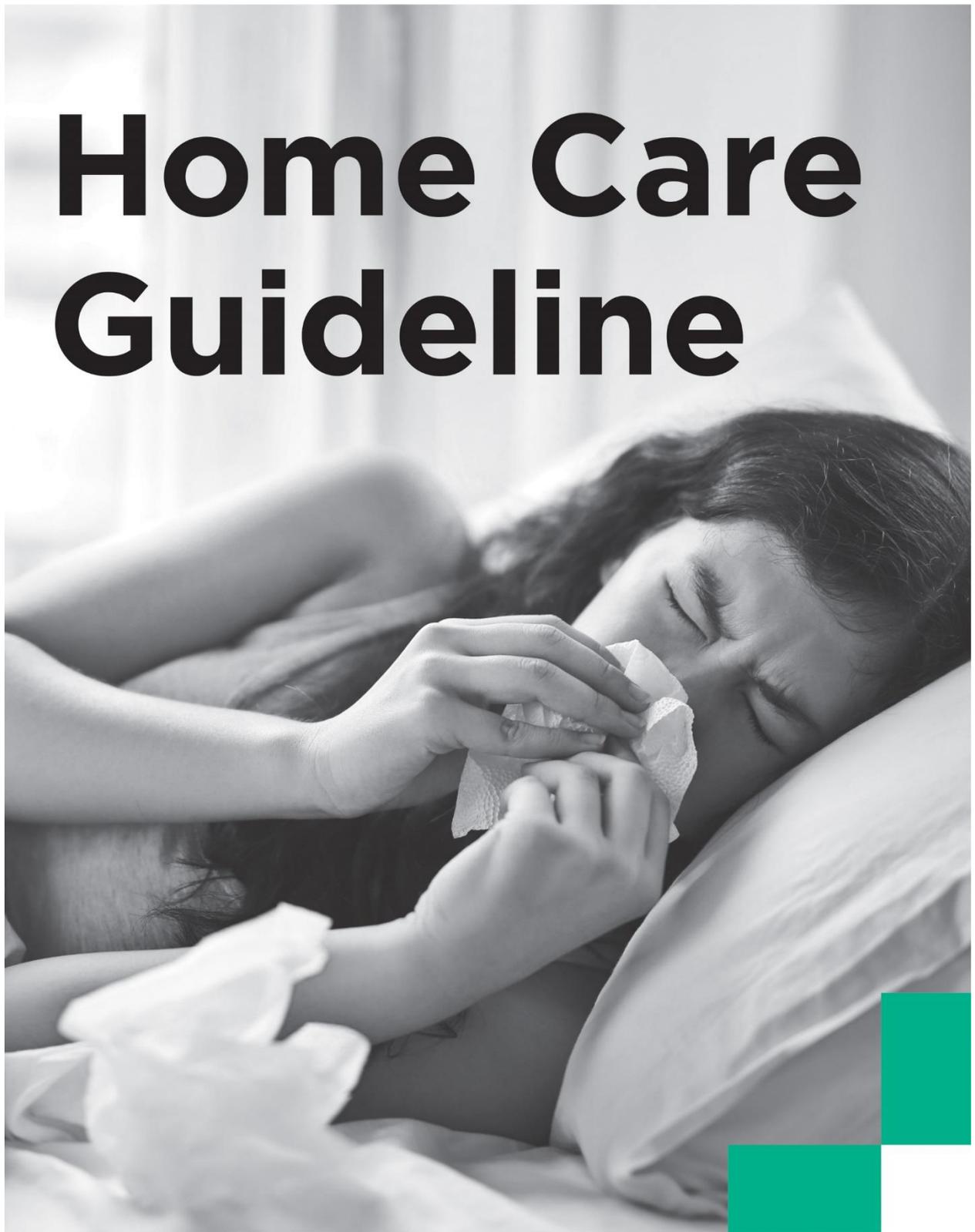


Home Care Guideline



Contents

1	Monitor your symptoms	3
1.1	Do not wait: Emergency warning signs	3
2	Prevent the virus from spreading at home	3
2.1	Separate yourself from other people.....	3
2.2	Shared spaces: bedrooms, kitchens, dining rooms, bathrooms	4
2.3	Cleaning	4
2.4	Cover your coughs and sneezes	5
2.5	Wear a Mask	5
2.6	Clean your hands often	6
3	Support your immune system.....	6
4	Re-testing & Medical Certificate	7
4.1	“I need a medical Certificate to return to work/school/university”	8
5	De-isolation.....	8
6	Caring for a sick person - Monitor yourself	8
7	Sources	8

Introduction

A person who is diagnosed with COVID-19 and able to stay home, will experience mild symptoms. The duration of the symptoms varies from person to person and can last between a few days to more than a week. Most people might feel better within a week.

It is important that you follow the doctor’s recommendations and isolate yourself at home.

Treating COVID-19 at home includes relieving symptoms, rest, taking fluids and pain relievers where necessary.

The guideline in this booklet is a compilation of advice and guidelines as set out by the WHO, CDC, NICD, DoH and doctors at Zuid-Afrikaans Hospital, to name a few.

It is important to prevent the virus from spreading to members in your household when a person isolates at home. The important things to remember are:

- **Isolate yourself at home.** Stay at home for a minimum of 14 days from the day your symptoms started. Do not leave your house, except if you need medical support. Do not visit public areas or go shopping.
- **Take care of yourself.** Get enough rest and drink plenty of fluids. Take over-the-counter medicines and vitamins to support your health and symptoms. Eat a healthy diet. Sit in the sun every day for a few minutes.
- **Stay in touch with your doctor.** Call before you get medical care so that they are correctly prepared for your arrival. Seek medical care if you develop any emergency warning signs.
- **Avoid public transport,** taxis, busses, sharing rides or trains.

1 Monitor your symptoms

It is important to monitor your symptoms on a daily basis to evaluate your progress.

Symptoms of **COVID-19** include:

- loss of taste or smell
- fever
- dry cough
- tiredness
- body aches and pains
- sore throat
- diarrhoea
- conjunctivitis
- headache
- a rash on skin, or discolouration of fingers or toes
- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- chest pain or pressure
- loss of speech or movement

Follow the instructions from your doctor or healthcare practitioner and take over the counter medication and supplements to support your health and manage your symptoms.

1.1 Do not wait: Emergency warning signs

If symptoms worsen, seek medical care immediately. The virus is very unpredictable, and a sick person may deteriorate very quickly.

Emergency signs include:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent chest pain or pressure
- New confusion
- Bluish lips or face

2 Prevent the virus from spreading at home

Understand that the virus spreads through contact and droplet infection. New evidence also suggests that the virus can be airborne, making the wearing of masks even more important.

- Contact – when I touch a surface infected with the virus or I am in close contact with a person (less than 1.5m) who is infected with the virus. The virus can be transferred through inhaling the virus, it is on my hands and eyes.
- Droplet – when I breathe the virus in or the virus lands on my eyes when I am in contact with a person who is infected.
- Airborne – small particles of the virus floats in the air and I inhale it or it lands on my eyes.

It is therefore important that a person isolates themselves from others to limit and prevent the virus from spreading through contact or droplet infection.

2.1 Separate yourself from other people

As much as possible, stay in a separate room and away from other people. If possible, use a separate bathroom.

- Eat in a room separated from others.

- If you cannot be in a separate room, please wear a mask at all times and stay at least 1.5m-2m away from others.
- Do not receive visitors.
- If possible, send someone to buy groceries, medications, and other essentials
- If you have access to the internet - do online shopping and request home delivery
- Do not exercise outside

2.2 Shared spaces: bedrooms, kitchens, dining rooms, bathrooms

It is important to keep a social distance of 2m or more between yourself and others. If the areas are small, wait until the other person moves out of the space before entering the same space.

- Open windows and increase air circulation. This helps to remove respiratory droplets floating in the air.
- People who are sick and anyone who has a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should eat in their room, if possible.
- Do not share towels, dishes, drinking glasses, cups, or eating utensils.
- If you share the same bedroom with someone, you may want to consider hanging a sheet / shower curtain between the beds in the same room.
- If you share a bed with someone and cannot sleep anywhere else, you may want to consider hanging a sheet / shower curtain between yourselves.
- Where possible, let someone make your meals for you. There is no evidence to suggest that the virus can be transmitted in food, (McMahan, 2020) but that close contact with others in your house does put household members at risk and it is therefore best to separate yourself, while someone else cooks. If the sick person is the primary caregiver in a house, ask assistance from neighbours or friends to assist with this duty.

2.3 Cleaning

a. Dishes

- Do not share dishes, cups, eating utensils, towels and more.
- Items should be thoroughly washed with soap and hot water or washed in a dishwasher.
- You may wash dishes of a sick person with other dishes.
- Wear gloves when washing.

b. Laundry

- Place possibly contaminated laundry, including non-medical cloth masks and facial coverings, into a container with a plastic liner and lid.
- Do not shake dirty laundry.
- Wear disposable gloves and a mask when doing laundry of a person who is sick.
- Wash items at the highest possible and appropriate water setting (recommend above 60°C) and dry items in the sun or tumble dry items completely. Iron items after dry.
 - Dirty laundry from a person who is sick can be washed with other laundry.
 - Clean and disinfect around the washing machine when done.
 - Clean your hands after handling laundry items of a sick person.

c. Cleaning

- Wear disposable gloves and a mask, where possible, to clean and disinfect.
- Frequently clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces in common areas (e.g. tables, hard-backed chairs, doorknobs, light switches, phones, touch screens, remote controls, keyboards, handles, desks, toilets, sinks and more)
- Clean shared surfaces using soap and water, then use a disinfectant.
 - Cleaning with soap and water reduces number of germs, dirt, and impurities on the surface.
 - Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces.
- If you have to share a bathroom with a sick person, the bathroom must be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- If the sick person is able to do so, they should clean their own room and bathroom to avoid unnecessary contact.
- Avoid unnecessary contact with the ill person – only clean the area of the sick person when needed and when the person is not able to do so themselves.

d. Disposing of garbage

- Put used gloves or any other disposable items that may be contaminated in a garbage bag.
- Handle the bag with disposable gloves and a mask.
- Clean your hands when the task is completed.

2.4 Cover your coughs and sneezes

- Cough or sneeze in your elbow or cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. (SACoronavirus, 2020)
- Throw away used tissues in a lined dustbin.
- Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol.

2.5 Wear a Mask

- If you are COVID-19 positive, wear a mask or cloth covering. If you sneeze or cough, the mask acts as a barrier to contain droplets that may carry the virus. This will reduce the amount of virus particles released into the air.
- Always wear your mask when you are around other people. You may only take it off when you are alone in your room and not an area not used by others.
- When you cannot wear a mask because you have trouble breathing, for example, cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and discard it in a bin. Do not keep it in your pocket or put it on a surface. Keep your distance from people around you.
- Young children under 2 years, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is not able to remove the covering without help, should not wear a mask.

2.6 Clean your hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food. Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty.
- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% - 70% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

3 Support your immune system

(Source: Dr. Coert Gous)

The statistics regarding the Covid-19 pandemic is well known and widely distributed in the media. Most of the medical information regarding the treatment and management of patients infected by the virus focus on the 20% of the patients who are either very ill or critical and need admission.

80% of patients who tested positive have very mild or even no symptoms at all.

The following is a short DIY list of easy, non-expensive and mostly natural but important things that one can do to minimize the effects of this common enemy. Please note the articles on this topic not been peer reviewed.

There are a number of things you can do at home:

a. Sleep and melatonin

Increase your levels of Melatonin. Melatonin is a naturally produced hormone in the body that regulates the sleep-wake cycle.

We can increase our levels of melatonin naturally by getting enough and proper sleep. We can even increase it more by sleeping when it is dark and by avoiding artificial and blue light in the evening (this unfortunately will mean fewer social media and TV at night).

b. Less stress for less cortisol

Reduce high levels of cortisol. Cortisol is also known as the stress hormone.

Decrease your cortisol levels by lowering your stress levels. Testing positive for the virus may leave many very stressful, but it might help to be mindful of the fact that the majority of people have either no or very mild symptoms. The uncertain times we are all experiencing currently also increases our stress levels significantly.

Do things that takes your mind of stressful situations such as reading, crafts or watching television.

c. Stay well hydrated

Increase your hydration.

Drink at least 2L of fresh water a day. Increase this to 2.5L if possible as fever and mucus production causes more fluid loss than normal.

d. Sun exposure for vitamin D

Increase your vitamin D levels. Vitamin D is known for its function in a healthy immune system and aids in our defence against certain diseases. Being outdoors, when it is possible, also calms your stress levels.

Vitamin D forms part of the treatment regime in hospitals. Increase your Vitamin D levels naturally by exposing yourself to at least 15 - 20 minutes of direct sunlight daily on approximately 15% of exposed skin.

e. Healthy diet for vitamins B and C

Vitamins B and C has a direct impact on our general well-being and defence mechanisms against disease. Vitamin B impacts our energy levels, brain function, and cell metabolism. Vitamin C is an antioxidant and protects our body from immune system deficiencies.

These vitamins form part of the in-hospital treatment regime. Although we can buy over the counter vitamins, we can still increase our intake of these vitamins with a healthy diet of a variety of fruit and vegetables which contains them.

f. Zinc

Zinc is an important element that supports our immune system.

It also forms part of the treatment regime of patients admitted to hospital. Although we can augment our intake with over-the-counter Zinc preparations, we can easily increase our Zinc levels with a proper healthy diet with zinc containing vegetables and fruits.

g. Steam and Eucalyptus

The COVID-19 virus cannot function properly in heated environments.

We can lower the viral load in our nasal passages through steaming. Steaming with Eucalyptus will also help with symptomatic relief of the upper airway symptoms.

A simple method is to take 2 teaspoons of Vicks VapoRub or a few drops of eucalyptus oil and dissolve it into hot water in a big bowl. Cover your head with a towel over the bowl so that you can inhale the steam through your nose and mouth. Make sure to put the bowl on a steady surface and ask someone to hold the bowl for you to avoid spilling the hot water as this can potentially cause burns which is also the reason why this is sometimes not advocated by certain professional bodies.

Although this method will not kill the virus, some evidence suggests that it will reduce the severity of symptoms and shorten the duration of disease.

h. Nasal flushing to lower the load.

Lower the intranasal viral load by flushing the nasal passages with a saline solution 3 times a day. Many over-the-counter preparations are available, and a salt solution can even be prepared at home.

i. Your elbow is your friend

The virus spreads by irritating the intranasal and airway passages causing us to cough and sneeze. Practice proper cough and sneeze etiquette to stop its “transport system” in its tracks. Wear your mask while you are ill.

j. Wash your hands, sanitize and mask up

Follow basic hygiene and precautionary steps. Please stay safe and focus on your own health now more than ever.

4 Re-testing & Medical Certificate

It is not necessary to retest. Retesting after 14 days could result in a positive diagnosis, because the test will identify dead virus particles which may still be present. This will waste a scarce test kit and place pressure on overburdened laboratories.

Experience indicates that it is better to retest 18-21 after symptom onset to eliminate a false positive.

If an employer/school insists on a test certificate to have the person return as quickly as possible, the person will test positive again and will have to remain in isolation for another 14 days.

Once you are back at work/school, continue to wear your mask in your work environment for another 7 days to eliminate any possibility of shedding any potential virus particles.

4.1 “I need a medical Certificate to return to work/school/university”

Patients who tested positive and self-isolated at home for 14 days can be assessed by one of our Emergency Department doctors. The hospital will issue a certificate which will state the doctor’s findings and the patient’s ability to safely return to work or school.

Companies/education institutions can trust 14 days of isolation as enough evidence that the person may return to work/school/college or university.

Once a Zuid-Afrikaans doctor has assessed a patient, the certificate issued will confirm that the patient did indeed self-isolate and that the person’s health is deemed safe to return to work / school without retesting patients who isolated.

5 De-isolation

You can de-isolate 14 days after the onset of your symptoms in mild cases, or 14 days after being stable in severe cases.

- A COVID-19 positive patient must be at least **3 days symptom free** before de-isolation.
- If the person is not symptom free, continue the self-isolation until you are 3 days symptom free.

6 Caring for a sick person - Monitor yourself

It is important to monitor your symptoms if you are caring for a sick person.

Direct contact with a COVID-19 positive patient puts anyone at risk. Monitor your symptoms twice daily to see you if you develop any symptoms. If you do develop symptoms, isolate yourself for 14 days. (symptoms are listed at the beginning of this guide on page 1)

Symptoms of COVID-19 can vary from person to person. Symptoms may also vary in different age groups.

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