



The national LGBTQI+ Disabled People's Organisation

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Isolating Yourself from Coronavirus

This information is for Disabled and older people who are especially vulnerable to infection because they have heart disease, are undergoing cancer treatment, have previously had transplant surgery, or have impaired immune systems. Isolating yourself is a drastic step, so think carefully about whether and when it is necessary for you, and talk to your GP first if possible. Isolation cannot remove the risk completely.

Food and Drink

Read our advice sheet on **Food Shopping for the Coronavirus** and organise your store cupboard.

Set up supermarket deliveries well in advance, as there are longer waiting times than usual.

Remember that Coronavirus does not cause significant sneezing, so there is no need to buy extra toilet paper or tissues, but make sure to stock up on ordinary soap and paper towels.

Medication

If you take medication regularly, ensure you are signed up to a pharmacy delivery service and tell them that you are isolating yourself and why. If you usually collect your medication in person, contact your pharmacy or GP to find out where delivery services are available.

If you have been taking your medication long term without side-effects, ask your GP for three months supply now. This will help your GP and pharmacy to focus on supplying medication to people who are newly ill, as well as reducing your exposure through deliveries.

If you don't usually take an anti-inflammatory such as Naproxen, Nurofen/ Ibuprofen or Voltarol, ask your GP for a prescription for aspirin or ibuprofen now. Coronavirus complications are caused by inflammation, and taking anti-inflammatory medication from day one of coronavirus symptoms starting may help to reduce complications later.

Also talk to your GP or pharmacist about taking extra vitamins and other supplements.

Emergency planning

Think now about what you will do if you are ill, either with Coronavirus or as a result of your existing condition, or if your pet is ill. Keep a list of important contacts, including your GP and pharmacy.

Not everything can be done virtually. Is there anyone available who can pick up letters and parcels and take them to the post office for you?

If you don't have regular support from family or friends but use social services, make sure your local authority knows that you would require support in an emergency. Ask social services for an emergency contact number, and get details of any additional services that are being provided for vulnerable residents locally.

Avoiding Infection

Ordinary soap is the number one enemy of Coronavirus, more so than any other product available. Even if you are not going out, you should still wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds at a time with soap and water. You can also use soapy water to clean phones and other items that are exposed to the outside world, using paper towel and throwing this away in a tied plastic bag afterwards.

If you are able to do your own cleaning, do this as often as possible. Dirt can make you ill and therefore more vulnerable to other infections. Mix bleach with soapy water to kill bacteria and viruses, but wear gloves.

If you have to go out to medical appointments, ask your local or hospital pharmacist to supply you with masks and disposable gloves, and use them throughout the time you are away from home. The pharmacist will be able to prioritise you for supply if you have reduced immunity or vulnerable.

Avoid public transport including cabs if at all possible. If you don't have a car, a lift from a friend will always reduce your risk of exposure to infection. Remember that many people will be working from home and able to help when they are usually unavailable.

Keep an area by your front door for outdoor clothing and shoes, with hand sanitizer, a bowl of soapy water and paper towels and a supply of plastic bags.

When you return home, first use hand sanitiser on the gloves. Then take off your outer clothing and shoes and wash the soles of your shoes with soapy water, before removing and disposing of your mask and gloves in a tied plastic bag. Use hand sanitiser before touching anything, then wash your hands thoroughly as soon as you can reach a basin.

If you use a wheelchair, also wash the push rims and the arm rests with soapy water before taking off your gloves. If you use a walking stick or cane, wash that too, but don't use the same one indoors.

Deliveries

If you are able to carry deliveries from outside your front door, do not allow delivery drivers into your home. If this is impossible because you cannot lift, ask for time to put on a mask and gloves before you open the door. Most delivery firms will offer you the option of adding a note, or will provide a phone number for contact purposes. Don't prolong the visit by chatting, and only ask for the delivery to be brought as far into your home as is strictly necessary.

If parcels are being delivered, then leaving them by the door for 3 days will allow any virus on the surfaces to die off naturally. If this is not possible, then take off the outer wrappings by the door wearing a mask and gloves, and dispose of the wrapping, mask and gloves in a tied plastic bag as usual.

Food in tins and packets can also be left untouched until any virus on the surface is dead. Otherwise, take off any unnecessary packaging at the place where the food has been left while you are still masked and gloved (use sanitiser on the gloves first), and wash your hands thoroughly once the gloves are off again.

Visitors

Insist that anyone coming into your home (other than delivery people) leaves their outer clothing, bags and shoes at the door and uses hand sanitiser. They should then go straight to the nearest basin and wash their hands thoroughly.

If visitors are wearing masks, they must leave these in a tied bag at the door too and use one that you provide within your home. Masks protect the person who is wearing them, but can still carry infection to other people. If you have regular social care or medical visits at home, ask the pharmacy for a supply of masks for visitors.

Mental health and wellbeing

Isolation for people with reduced immunity is likely be necessary for months rather than weeks. Create your wellbeing strategy right at the start.

Think about how you will stay as fit as you can while you are indoors. Fitness is essential to fighting infection if you become ill, and improves the success rate for cancer treatments.

Keep in touch with your friends and colleagues by phone, Skype or email. This is a good opportunity to improve your online skills. Never used Facebook, WhatsApp or Twitter? Now is the time to try. You may make new friends for life, as well as connecting with old ones.

Rediscover home-based activities you used to enjoy, as well as finding something new to do.

- Learn a new skill — there is a vast range of 'how to' videos on YouTube.
- Write your autobiography or that novel you always planned.
- Watch every episode of your favourite TV show.
- Learn to bake and make your own snacks – just add plain flour and sugar to your store cupboard and look online for recipes.
- Join an ancestry site, research your roots and celebrate your unique story.
- Revamp your wardrobe.
- Join in with online activities – for example, the Disability Arts organisation Together! 2012 CIC has launched an online arts activity programme at www.together2012.org.uk

Think about ways to get fresh air, but don't go outside if you have close neighbours. 'Indoor gardening' with house plants is increasingly popular, and plants can be ordered over the internet. If you have access to the post, think about taking cuttings and posting them to new social contacts who don't have house plants.

For more information and up-to-date resources from Regard, visit our website www.regard.org.uk or find us on Facebook.

**Please let us know at Regard if you are struggling and we will see what we can do to put you in touch with sources of help:
secretary@regard.org.uk**

**The Disability Law Service may also be able to help if you have problems with benefits or services: advice@dls.org.uk / dls.org.uk
0207 791 9800.**

Please note that Regard has produced this information in the absence of official guidance. It is not intended to replace official guidance, and further advice should always be sought where possible. Regard cannot accept liability for any negative impact arising from using this information sheet.