

How to recover from Covid-19 at home

Getting infected with Covid-19 is a frightening, isolating experience. But as more people endure it, the community of survivors is growing – and with them comes better guidance. This note has been compiled based on an article “How to recover from Covid-19 at home” by Maggie Astor that appeared in *The New York Times* on May 27th 2020.

The basic advice we are told is to **rest, keep your fluid intake up and reduce fever**, but we thought that the additional advice from this article on how to manage non-critical cases of Covid-19, might be useful.

When to get help:

You need to seek medical attention if you have any of the following signs and symptoms:

- Trouble breathing
- Respiratory rate more than 25 breaths per minute
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake, or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face
- Pulse rate more than 120 beats per minute

People who have been infected tend to develop **shortness of breath** (or for some, dizziness or light-headedness – also indications of low oxygen levels) 4-8 days after their first symptoms. This is an important sign, and **if it worsens, that’s a sign to call your doctor**. Some people also report a disruption of their sense of **smell and taste**.

If you are infected, try as far as possible to **use a cloth mask** (see graphic below) to reduce the number of spray droplets released into the air from your mouth and nose. This is to protect your family members and those around you.

Basic supplies:

It would be helpful to have some **basic supplies** in your home, such as a thermometer, paracetamol (try to avoid anti-inflammatories), and some rehydration drinks. Don’t forget to get a supply of your usual (chronic) medication for conditions like hypertension, cholesterol, diabetes, epilepsy, depression/anxiety. Supplements that may also help: multivitamins with vitamin C, Selenium and Zinc.

The article suggests that a pulse oximeter can be helpful, which will help to monitor your oxygen levels. These are available online, but **if you are worried about your levels, you should still contact your doctor**.

Make a list:

Make a list of people who need to be contacted if your condition worsens, which doctor to call, which hospital to go to, who will look after family members. And don’t forget about your pets.

Add your medical aid information to that list.

Medication:

Over-the-counter medication may not be enough. In particular, the **coughing** and **nausea** caused by Covid-19 might be so severe that you need prescription medication. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about this sooner rather than later – don’t wait until you’re doubled over coughing, or can’t keep anything down!

Ease your breathing:

Dry air can make your symptoms worse – so if you have a **humidifier**, use it. Some people report that they felt better when they lay on their stomach. Your doctor may prescribe an inhaler to reduce your cough and ease your breathing.

Monitor your symptoms:

As soon as you get sick, **start a detailed log**. This creates a detailed record to take with you should you need medical attention, and will also help you to monitor your own condition:

- Take your temperature several times a day and write it down.
- Every time you take a pill, write it down

- Every time you eat or drink, write it down
- If one symptom resolves or a new one develops, write it down

Don't expect a linear recovery:

Some people have mild symptoms for the first few days and then suddenly get sicker. Some have fevers that go up and down repeatedly. Others are sick for two weeks, have a few symptom-free days, and then relapse. Some have lingering symptoms for months.

This is both maddening and very common. Give yourself as much time to rest as your situation will allow. Every day, people will feel like they are hitting a wall that they can't get beyond – and every day, people will find their way past it.

You might feel alone, but you won't be.

You can contact members of our Covid-19 task team via the church.

Mental health matters:

Having Covid-19 is intensely stressful. It is not unusual to feel depressed or anxious, or to have panic attacks. Don't be embarrassed to talk about your mental health – it is just as important as your physical health.

It's OK to not be OK. You don't have to handle this 'well', whatever that means. You just have to get through each day.

Sent with love and blessings –

If you are looking after someone who has tested positive for Covid-19

What follows assumes all others in the house have NOT tested positive

You cannot wash your hands enough!

ALWAYS wear a mask, consider wearing gloves when handling items that might be contaminated - but then discard gloves safely or wash thoroughly. *Then wash your hands.*

- **Isolate** the positive person to a space where there is as little contact with others as possible, including their own bathroom if possible. If isolation is not possible and space has to be shared, the positive person must ALWAYS wear a mask and *wash hands* before entering the space, cough into a tissue and dispose immediately, then *wash hands* etc. Others in the shared space should wear masks and keep 2m distance, and *wash hands frequently*.
- **Ventilate**: Open windows for ventilation as this disperses droplets, and close doors to shared spaces.
- **De-contaminate**: All surfaces touched by the positive person must be wiped with 70% alcohol or bleach solution (see below). *Then wash your hands*. Cutlery and crockery used by the positive person should be put straight into a dishwasher or soapy, hot water, *then hands washed well*. If handling rubbish (discarded tissues etc), remove and DOUBLE bag them then discard and *wash hands well*. Put dirty clothes immediately into the washing machine (don't let them lie around), *wash hands well*. Wash laundry at 60 degrees and iron or leave in full sun to help decontaminate.

BLEACH ('JIK') SOLUTION FOR DISINFECTING SURFACES

Add one tablespoon (15ml) of the bleach you buy in the shop (e.g. Jik) to half a litre of water,

OR

Add two tablespoons (30ml) of bleach to a litre of water. If you have a spray bottle, that works best.

Use this to clean surfaces frequently, especially when someone in the home has Covid-19.

HOW TO WEAR A NON-MEDICAL FABRIC MASK SAFELY

[who.int/epi-win](https://www.who.int/epi-win)

Do's →



Clean your hands before touching the mask



Inspect the mask for damage or if dirty



Adjust the mask to your face without leaving gaps on the sides



Cover your mouth, nose, and chin



Avoid touching the mask



Clean your hands before removing the mask



Remove the mask by the straps behind the ears or head



Pull the mask away from your face



Store the mask in a clean plastic, resealable bag if it is not dirty or wet and you plan to re-use it



Remove the mask by the straps when taking it out of the bag



Wash the mask in soap or detergent, preferably with hot water, at least once a day



Clean your hands after removing the mask

Don'ts →



Do not use a mask that looks damaged



Do not wear a loose mask



Do not wear the mask under the nose



Do not remove the mask where there are people within 1 metre



Do not use a mask that is difficult to breathe through



Do not wear a dirty or wet mask



Do not share your mask with others

A fabric mask can protect others around you. To protect yourself and prevent the spread of COVID-19, remember to keep at least 1 metre distance from others, clean your hands frequently and thoroughly, and avoid touching your face and mask.



World Health Organization