

## COVID-19: Advice on how to self-isolate

14<sup>th</sup> April 2020

### 1. What is self-isolation?

Self-isolation is voluntary isolation at home by those who have or are likely to have COVID-19 and are experiencing mild symptoms of the disease (in contrast to those who are severely ill and may be isolated in a hospital). The purpose of self-isolation is to prevent spread of infection from an infected person to others who are not infected. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you should self-isolate. We are advising everyone with symptoms of COVID-19 to self-isolate for 14 days from when they first get symptoms. Self-isolation means you stay at home and avoid contact with other people, including those in your household.

You should strongly consider self-isolation if you:

- have been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting test results
- have been exposed to COVID-19 and are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (fever, cough, difficulty breathing), whether or not you have been tested
- have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (fever, cough, difficulty breathing) but have not had known exposure to the new coronavirus and have not been tested for the virus that causes COVID-19. In this case, contact the IST Clinic as similar symptoms may also be caused by malaria, dengue or other infections.

### 2. What kind of symptoms could I expect to feel with COVID-19?

Not everyone who has COVID-19 will have the same symptoms. An estimated 80% of people who get it will have mild symptoms. They will recover on their own at home with rest and care. Very common symptoms are fever, fatigue, any kind of cough or muscle pain. Less common symptoms are sore throat, mild shortness of breath, runny or blocked nose, or headache. Occasional symptoms are diarrhoea, nausea or vomiting.

It is important to be aware that fever and flu symptoms can also be caused by malaria, dengue or another infection, **thus it is important to contact/attend the IST clinic for all cases of fever.**

### 3. How long do I have to self-isolate for?

You can stop self-isolating at home after **14 days since you first developed any symptoms** and if you have been **free of fever for the last 5 days.**

### 4. Keep yourself safe and well while self-isolating at home

- Notify the IST Clinic that you are self-isolating at home.
- Monitor your symptoms and contact the IST Clinic if your condition worsens (see also point 5.2)
- At a minimum, check in with the IST Clinic by phone **7 days** after you first developed symptoms, as this is a critical period. For high risk patients, the IST Clinic will discuss a more regular schedule for check-in by phone call and/or house visits.
- Try and keep active by getting up and moving around as much as possible. If you have your own outdoor space, you can go out to get some fresh air but please keep away from other people, including neighbours. Keep a distance of 2 metres (6 feet) from other people.
- Eat well and drink plenty of fluids to keep you hydrated.
- Take paracetamol for your fever, muscle aches or headaches.
- Avoid alcohol if you are feeling unwell.
- Do not smoke.
- You may feel anxious or lonely when you have to spend time on your own. Try and keep in touch with friends and family members by phone.

## 5. Keeping everyone safe and well while you self-isolate at home

### 5.1 Stay at home

- Do not go out except if you have your own outdoor space to get some fresh air.
- Phone family or neighbours and ask for help if you need groceries, other shopping or medications.

### 5.2 Monitor your symptoms

- Monitor yourself for fever (temperature >38 degrees Celsius) by taking your temperature with a thermometer twice a day. Remain alert for cough and shortness of breath.
  - If you have not had symptoms and you begin to feel feverish, cough, or difficulty breathing, immediately limit contact with others if you have not already done so. Call the IST Clinic to determine whether you need a medical evaluation.
- If you have any of the following symptoms, this may be a sign that your illness is worsening. In this case, **contact the IST Clinic immediately**. You will be seen by one of the doctors at the COVID19 section of the clinic or a home visit can be made.
  - Severe fatigue
  - Prolonged moderate to high fever (38.5 degrees Celsius or higher)
  - Shortness of breath (definer for adults as a respiratory rate of > 20 breaths per minute and a heart rate of > 110 beats per minute)
  - Pain or pressure on the chest
  - Cold clammy skin
  - Reduced alertness
  - Blue lips or face
  - Little or no urine output
  - Coughing up blood

### 5.3 Keep away from other people in your home as much as you can

- Stay in a separate room with a window you can open, if possible.
- If you have to go into the same room with other people at home you should try to keep at least 1 metre (3 ft) and where possible 2 metres away from them. Wash your hands regularly. When you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a clean tissue. Put used tissues into the bin. Use the inside of your elbow if you don't have a tissue.
- If you can, use a separate toilet and bathroom to the rest of the people in your home.
- If you don't have your own toilet and bathroom, make sure to keep the toilet and bathroom very clean.

### 5.4 Clean your hands

- Clean your hands regularly, least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food. This is one of the most important things you can do.
- Try not to touch your face.

### 5.5 Cover your coughs and sneezes

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Place used tissues into a plastic waste bag (see note below for managing rubbish), and immediately clean your hands with alcohol hand rub or wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

## **5.6 Do not share things**

- Do not share food, dishes, drinking glasses, cups, knives, forks and spoons or other items with other people in your household.
- Wash kitchen items with washing up liquid and hot water, after use. If you are not well enough, someone else in the house can do this for you. The person should use household or rubber gloves if available. Wash and dry the gloves after each use. They should wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after taking off the gloves.
- Do not share towels, bedding or other items with other people in your household (see laundry advice below).
- If you use remote controls or games consoles clean them thoroughly before anyone else in the house uses them.
- If you cough or sneeze on a screen, a phone, or game console, wipe the screen clean immediately.

## **5.7 Do not have visitors in your home**

- Do not invite or allow unnecessary visitors to come into the home.
- If someone urgently needs to come to the house, keep at least 1 metre (3ft) and where possible 2 metres (6.5ft) away from them and advise them that you are not well.

## **5.8 Toileting and bathing**

- If possible, use a toilet that no one else is using.
- If that is not possible and you do not have your own toilet or bathroom, clean your hands before entering, after using the toilet and before you leave the room. If you have a bath or shower, clean any surfaces you have touched afterwards.
- Do not share your towels with anyone else.

## **5.9 Household cleaning**

- All surfaces, such as counters, table-tops, doorknobs, banisters, bathroom fixtures, toilets and toilet handles, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables, should be cleaned every day with a cleaning product.
- Use your usual household products, like detergents and bleach as these are very good at getting rid of the virus. Follow the instructions on the manufacturer's label and check they can be used on the surface you are cleaning.
- Wear household or rubber gloves, if you have them, when cleaning surfaces or handling dirty laundry. Wash and dry them after use. Always wash your hands after you take off the gloves.
- Wash reusable cleaning cloths in a hot wash cycle of a washing machine after use.
- Put disposable gloves and cleaning cloths in a plastic waste bag after using them (see advice about managing rubbish below).

## **5.10 Laundry**

- Wash laundry at the highest temperature that the material can stand.
- Tumble dry items and iron using a hot setting or steam iron.
- If you have household or rubber gloves you can wear them when handling dirty laundry. Hold laundry items away from yourself.
- Wash your hands after handling dirty laundry, whether you used gloves or not.
- Do not send laundry to a laundrette.

## **5.11 Managing rubbish**

- Put all your personal waste including used tissues and all cleaning waste in a plastic rubbish bag.
- Tie the bag when it is almost full, place it into a second bin bag and tie it.
- Once the bag has been tied securely leave it somewhere safe and secure. The bags should be left for kept somewhere safe for three days before putting them out for collection.

## 6. How can I protect myself while caring for someone that may have COVID-19?

You should take many of the same precautions as you would if you were caring for someone with the flu:

- Stay in another room or be separated from the person as much as possible. Use a separate bedroom and bathroom, if available.
- Make sure that shared spaces in the home have good air flow. Turn on an air conditioner or open a window.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60 to 95% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Use soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Extra precautions:
  - You and the person should wear a face mask if you are in the same room.
- Wear a disposable face mask and gloves when you touch or have contact with the person's blood, stool, or body fluids, such as saliva, sputum, nasal mucus, vomit, urine.
  - Throw out disposable face masks and gloves after using them. Do not reuse.
  - First remove and throw away gloves. Then, immediately clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Next, remove and throw away the face mask, and immediately clean your hands again with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Do not share household items such as dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other items with the person who is sick. After the person uses these items, wash them thoroughly.
- Clean all "high-touch" surfaces, such as counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables, every day. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash laundry thoroughly.
  - Immediately remove and wash clothes or bedding that have blood, stool, or body fluids on them.
  - Wear disposable gloves while handling soiled items and keep soiled items away from your body. Clean your hands immediately after removing your gloves.
- Place all used disposable gloves, face masks, and other contaminated items in a lined container before disposing of them with other household waste. Clean your hands (with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer) immediately after handling these items.

## 7. Where can I find more information?

IST Clinic COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions: <https://www.istclinic.com/covid-19-frequently-asked-questions/>

IST Clinic Advice on COVID-19: <https://www.istclinic.com/covid-19-advice/>

Harvard Medical School: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/if-youve-been-exposed-to-the-coronavirus>

## 8. Contact Information

**For emergencies only:** 0754-783393

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