

Information leaflet for home carers of COVID 19 patients

This document is aimed at home carers of COVID-19 patients, based on the World Health Organisation's "Home care for patients with COVID-19 presenting with mild symptoms and management of their contacts".

1. Ventilation

- Open windows, especially in the patient's room and shared spaces such as bathrooms and kitchens.

2. Minimise shared space

- Limit the movement of the patient in the house and minimise shared space.
- Household members should stay in a different room or, if that is not possible, sleep in a separate bed.

3. Limit the number of contacts

- Limit the number of caregivers. Ideally, assign one person who is in good health and has no underlying chronic or immunocompromising conditions.
- Visitors should not be allowed until the patient has completely recovered.
- A breastfeeding mother should wear a medical mask when she is near her baby and perform hand hygiene before and after having close contact with the baby.

4. Hand hygiene

- Perform hand hygiene after any type of contact with the patient or their nearby environment.
- Hand hygiene should also be performed before and after preparing food, before eating, after using the toilet, and whenever hands look dirty.
- If hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand rub can be used.
- For visibly dirty hands use soap and water.
- When washing hands with soap and water, it is preferable to use disposable paper towels to dry hands. If these are not available, use clean cloth towels and replace them frequently.

5. Masks and respiratory hygiene

- If a patient has access to a mask to contain respiratory secretions, it should be worn as much as possible, and changed daily.
- If a caregiver has access to a mask, the caregiver should wear the mask when in the same room as the patient.
- Masks should not be touched or handled during use. If the mask gets wet or dirty from secretions, it must be replaced with a new clean and dry mask and not reused. The mask should be removed using the appropriate technique by not touching the front, but untying it.
- The mask should be immediately discarded after use and hand hygiene performed.
- If a patient does not have a mask or cannot tolerate a mask, then respiratory hygiene should be followed. The mouth and nose should be covered with a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing. Materials used to cover mouth and nose should be discarded or cleaned appropriately after use, e.g. handkerchiefs washed using regular soap or detergent and water.

6. Gloves

- Gloves and protective clothing (e.g. plastic aprons) should be used when cleaning surfaces or handling clothing or linen soiled with body fluids.
- After use utility gloves should be cleaned with soap and water and decontaminated with bleach, taking extra precautions, such as wearing goggles and gloves when handling bleach.
- Single-use gloves (e.g. nitrile or latex) should be discarded after each use.
- Hand hygiene should be performed before putting on and after removing gloves.
- Public Health England advises that home care waste (e.g. gloves and masks) should be placed into a disposable bag. The disposable bag should be placed into another disposable bag, tied securely and put aside for 72 hours before being placed in the household waste bin.

7. Cleaning

- Avoid direct contact with body fluids, particularly oral or respiratory secretions, and stool.
- Use gloves and a mask when providing oral or respiratory care and when handling stool, urine, and other waste. Perform hand hygiene before and after removing gloves and the mask.
- Do not reuse single-use gloves.
- Use dedicated linen and eating utensils for the patient; these items should be cleaned with soap and water after use and maybe reused instead of being discarded.
- Clean daily and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched in the room where the patient is being cared for, such as bedside tables, bed frames, and other bedroom furniture. Regular soap or detergent should be used first for cleaning, and then, after rinsing, regular household detergent or bleach should be applied.
- Clean and disinfect bathroom and toilet surfaces at least once daily. Regular household soap or detergent should be used first for cleaning, and then, after rinsing, household disinfectant containing bleach should be applied.
- Clean the patient's clothes, bed linen, and bath and hand towels using regular laundry soap and water or machine wash at 60–90 °C (140–194 °F) with ordinary household detergent, and dry thoroughly. Place contaminated linen into a laundry bag. Do not shake soiled laundry and avoid contaminated materials coming into contact with skin and clothes
- Avoid other types of exposure to contaminated items from the patient's immediate environment (e.g. do not share toothbrushes, cigarettes, eating utensils, dishes, drinks, towels, washcloths, or bed linen).

World Health Organization; 2020

([https://www.who.int/publications-detail/home-care-for-patients-with-suspected-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-presenting-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/home-care-for-patients-with-suspected-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-presenting-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts), Accessed 25 March 2020).

Public Health England; 2020 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-residential-care-supported-living-and-home-care-guidance/covid-19-guidance-on-home-care-provision>. Accessed 25 March 2020).