

Coronavirus

A practical guide
for caregivers
of elderly people



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This guide is for you, the caregiver of an elderly person.

Here you will find information about the coronavirus, and advice you should follow.

This information will allow you to deepen your knowledge about Covid-19, or "new coronavirus", how it is transmitted and what the symptoms of the disease are.

The advice on what to do at home and outdoors will help protect your health and that of the older person you care for.

Don't be afraid if at first the rules may seem too many, difficult to remember or to put in practice.

It is normal for changes in our habits to cause stress. Read this guide several times, without haste, and start applying its directions: in no time, they will become a part of your daily habits.

**All together,
we can succeed.**

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What is COVID-19 or "new coronavirus"?

Covid-19 is the disease caused by the **SAR-CoV-2** virus, also simply called "coronavirus".



What are the symptoms of coronavirus?

The disease can affect people differently; sometimes an infected person does not show any symptoms.

At other times, these symptoms may resemble those of a cold or a flu:

- **fever**
- **muscle pain**
- **nasal congestion**
- **sore throat**
- **cough**
- **difficult breathing (dyspnea)**
- **eye inflammation**
- **diarrhea**
- **severe headaches**
- **loss of smell**
- **loss of taste**

In some cases, however, the infection can cause severe pneumonia, which can even lead to death.

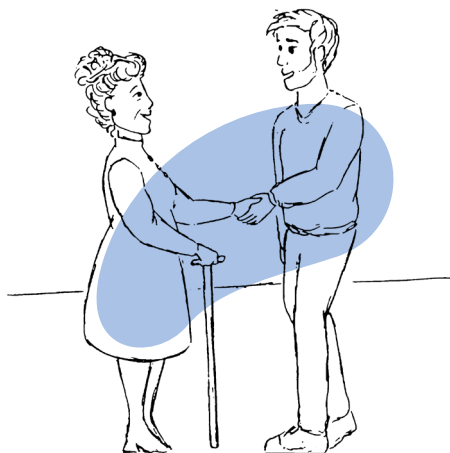
This may happen more frequently in aged people or people with health problems.

How is the coronavirus transmitted?

The virus is transmitted through small droplets of saliva, which we all emit through the mouth and nose when speaking, sneezing, or coughing. If the droplets containing the virus come into contact with our mouth, nose or eyes, infection may occur (that's why it is important to maintain a safety distance of at least one metre). Droplets from an infected person can also stick to their hands, or to nearby objects. Therefore, even objects that have been touched by an infected person may contain the virus (and that's why it is important to wash your hands frequently).



I am caring for an elderly person What I can do to protect both of us from the coronavirus



First of all, you must protect yourself:

1. try to get out of your home as little as possible: staying inside is the most effective way of avoiding infection ([page 8](#))
2. if you have to get out, follow the Advice detailed on [page 10](#)
3. at home, follow the Advice detailed on [page 12](#)

1. Try to get out of your home as little as possible

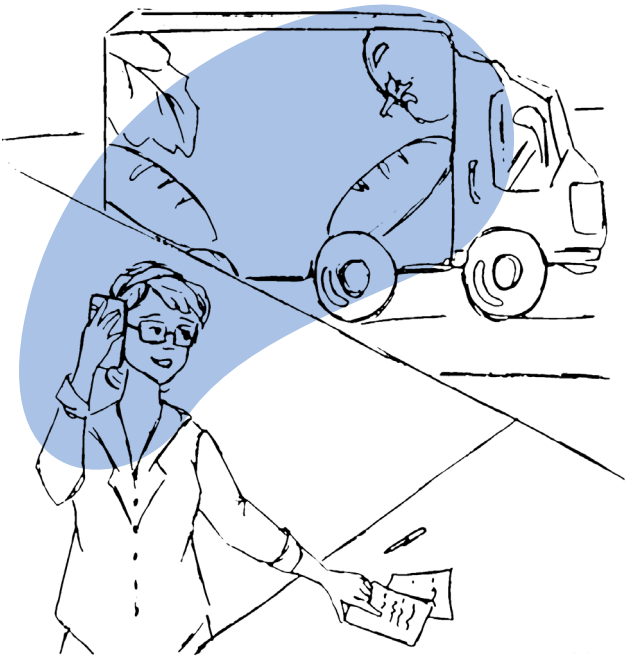
Every day we all must use some essential products: food, medicines, household cleaning products, etc.

If the family members of the person you are caring for cannot bring home everything you need, there are other solutions:

- Food and cleaning products can be ordered online or over the phone: ask your grocery store if groceries can be delivered directly to you at home.

Remember that on the website of your municipality you can find a list of shops, markets and supermarkets that have a home delivery service.

- Many pharmacies can deliver medicines directly at home. Ask your pharmacist if such a service is available. Try to buy a two-week supply, so you won't run out of medications should a delivery be delayed.



- You don't have to go to the doctor's office to get prescriptions - you can phone or e-mail. The doctor will send the electronic prescription number (NRE) via e-mail or SMS.

Remember: if necessary, the **Italian Red Cross** can bring medicines and food products to your home **for free**. The Red Cross answers every day of the week, 24 hours a day, at the toll free phone number **800 06 55 10**.

2- If you have to get out, follow this advice:



- Stay at least one metre away from other people.
- Avoid hugs and handshakes.
- If you have to get in an enclosed place frequented by other people, wear the surgical mask. In any case, be sure to follow the instructions of your regional or municipal authorities (in some areas the use of the mask is always mandatory when leaving home). Masks can be purchased at the pharmacy (see How to use the mask, on [page 24](#)). You may also search on the Internet: in some areas, the Civil Protection and the Municipality deliver masks to elderly or disabled people

directly at home. In the event that you cannot find them, use a washable cloth mask.

- When shopping at the market, supermarket or at the pharmacy, you may be asked to wear disposable gloves - see How to wear gloves, [on page 26](#)
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers frequently (with a 70% alcohol concentration), especially after contact with objects or surfaces continuously touched by other people (such as supermarket trolleys, hand rails on buses or in the subway, elevator controls, etc.).
- Do not touch your mouth, nose and eyes with your hands.
- When sneezing or coughing, cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue: after use, throw it immediately in the undifferentiated trash (if you do not have a tissue, do not use your hands to cover your mouth and nose, but use your elbow).
- As soon as you return home, wash your hands thoroughly. See How to wash your hands on [pag 22](#).

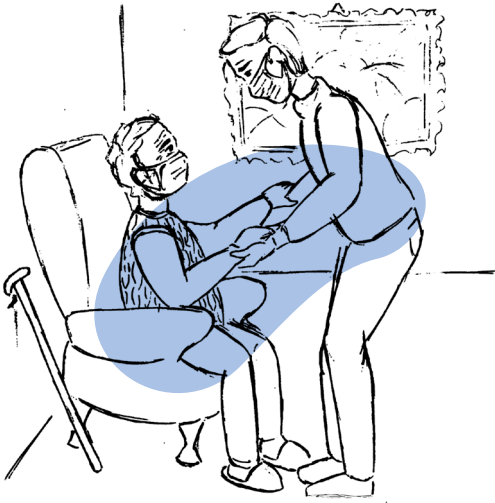
3 - At home, follow this advice

Elderly people often need help for getting up, walking, eating, and washing.

Therefore, it is necessary to be near them, and it is not possible to keep a distance of at least one metre.

That is why it is important to follow these indications:

- Be careful to wear the mask whenever you approach the elderly person. The elderly person, if showing a fever or symptoms similar to those of a cold or flu, should also wear a mask, if this does not cause him or her too much discomfort (see How to use the mask, on [page 24](#)). In case you can't find any surgical masks, use a washable cloth mask.



- Wear your mask when handling objects that the elderly person will use (such as bedding, towels, dishes, etc.) or that come from outside your home (mail, packages, etc.).

Remember: masks must be changed every day. If you wear a surgical mask, put it in a plastic bag when you are done with it, close it, and throw it in the undifferentiated trash. If the mask is washable, wash it carefully and allow it to dry completely before using it again (see How to use the mask, on [pag 24](#)).

- Wash your hands frequently (see How to wash your hands). Remember that hands should always be washed before and after preparing food (for added convenience, you can also

place a hand soap dispenser in the kitchen), before and after contact with the elderly person, and before and after helping him or her take medicines, eat and drink, wash and use the toilet. When you cannot use soap and water, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers (with a 70% alcohol concentration).

- Make sure that the elderly person washes his hands correctly and frequently; if he cannot do it by himself, wash his hands several times a day.
- When eating, do not use the same cutlery, glasses and plates as the elderly person: each of you must have his or her own.
- Carefully disinfect household bathtubs before and after each use (see Home Hygiene advice, [page 27](#)). If possible, do not use the same bathroom as the elderly person. If there is only one bathroom, each of you should use his or her own towels, bath towels and bathrobes. Towels should be changed when they are wet and, in any case, at least once a day.

- Keep toothbrushes in different glasses.
- When preparing food, remember to always wash raw foods thoroughly (such as salads, fruits, etc.) under running water. If you want to use disinfectants, use only those recommended for food: carefully follow the instructions on the label and remember to rinse food thoroughly under running water to remove any trace of disinfectant.
- Remember to thoroughly cook foods (such as meat, fish, and eggs) of animal origin.
- Open windows frequently to ventilate rooms.
- Clean the floors, bathrooms and all surfaces that are touched frequently every day: if possible use diluted bleach; you can also use normal household cleaning products and then alcohol with a 70% concentration (see Home hygiene advice [page 27](#)).



QUESTION&ANSWER

What should I do if I have the doubt that I, or the elderly person I am caring for, may have been infected by the virus?

The symptoms of the disease are manifold, they can be more or less severe, and sometimes similar to those of a cold or a flu.

In any case, if you, or the elderly person you are caring for, have:

- fever
- muscle pain
- nasal congestion
- sore throat
- cough
- difficult breathing (dyspnea)
- eye inflammation
- diarrhea
- severe headaches
- loss of smell
- loss of taste

call the elderly person's family or family doctor.

Remember: if you or the elderly person show any symptoms, don't go right away to the hospital emergency room or doctor's office. Phone your doctor first – he or she will tell you what to do.

If you can't talk to the doctor and can't ask the elderly person's family for help, call the medical guard or the regional toll-free number (you can find it on the Ministry of Health website www.salute.gov.it).

Call the emergency numbers **112** or **118** only if strictly necessary (high fever and difficult breathing). You will find the main emergency numbers on [page 31](#).



QUESTION&ANSWER

For a long period of time, I will not be able to get the person I care for out of the home. This could stress her and make her nervous. What can I do?

Explain in simple words what is happening due to the coronavirus; let her/him understand that staying home is necessary to protect everyone's health. The mask is also a protection against disease.

Reassure the elderly person that this moment will pass: we shall all go out again, to meet other people and resume our habits.

If the elderly person is concerned about her/his physical and psychological health, pay attention and make her/him understand that her well-being is important to you: you can talk together to her/his doctor on the phone or

call the numbers that offer free psychological help to people with difficulties (see [page 32](#)).

Repeat the explanations as many times as necessary, in a calm voice.

If it's useful, you can also use notes or drawings to communicate (for example, the image of a person washing her/his hands can be placed near the sink that the elderly person uses). Or when you wash your hands, you can ask the elderly person to do the same.

Try to convey a feeling of calm and serenity. Speak slowly and calmly, and not too loudly if the elderly person has a good hearing.



QUESTION&ANSWER

I cannot leave home, either. What can I do to remain in physical and psychological good health?

Use your social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp), emails, video chats and phone calls to keep in touch with your family, friends and acquaintances.

Take some free time every day to do things you like, such as listening to music, drawing, writing ...

Exercise every day.

Do not neglect sleep: try to get enough sleep to stay healthy, and observe a regular schedule for bedtime and getting up.

Eat regularly, don't skip meals and choose healthy foods (remember to eat fruit and vegetables every day).

Expose yourself to the sun in the cooler hours of the day: it is good for

your health and mood. Try to do the same with the person you are caring for.

While it is important to know the news about the coronavirus, this topic should not become the only one that interests you. Many other entertaining programs can be found on television and on the social media.

If you want to get further information about the coronavirus, check only reliable websites ([World Health Organization](#), [Ministry of Health](#), [Istituto Superiore di Sanità](#), [Civil Protection](#)) and listen to the news broadcasts of national and regional television networks.

The isolation that we have to bear and the fear of getting ill create anxiety and fear; experiencing these emotions is entirely normal. However, should you feel the need for psychological help, remember that there are numbers dedicated to these needs (see Useful contacts and links on [page 32](#)).

IN DEPTH INFORMATION



How to wash your hands


A complete washing should take approximately 60 seconds.

1. First, moisten your hands with water.
2. Then apply a sufficient amount of liquid soap and rub the palms of your hands together.
3. Continue rubbing, being careful to reach every part of your hands (palms, back, all the fingers and nails)
4. Rinse thoroughly your hands with water and dry them.
5. If you are away from home and can use paper towels, after washing and drying your hands use the same towel to turn off the water tap and touch any other object (like the door handle and light switch); finally throw it in the undifferentiated garbage, trying not to touch anything else.
6. Once dry, your hands will be safe!

Remember: short nails are easier to clean, and stay clean for a longer time.

How to Handwash?

WASH HANDS WHEN VISIBLY SOILED! OTHERWISE, USE HANDRUB

 **Duration of the entire procedure: 40-60 seconds**



Wet hands with water;



Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces;



Rub hands palm to palm;



Right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa;



Palm to palm with fingers interlaced;



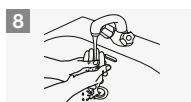
Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked;



Rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa;



Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa;



Rinse hands with water;



Dry hands thoroughly with a single use towel;



Use towel to turn off faucet;



Your hands are now safe.



World Health Organization

Patient Safety
A World Alliance for Safer Health Care

SAVE LIVES
Clean Your Hands

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How to wash your hands with water and soap. [Link to Poster](#)

How to wash your hands with water and soap or with alcohol-based gel. [Link to Video](#)

IN DEPTH INFORMATION



How to use the mask



The mask must be put on after having thoroughly washed your hands.

Cover your mouth and nose, making sure the mask is adhering tightly to your face (if you have a beard, the mask may not adhere perfectly).

While wearing the mask, be careful not to touch it; if you do, wash your hands.

Remember: the mask should be changed every day and, in any case, every time it gets wet, dirty or damaged.

When removing the mask, hold it by the elastic strap and do not touch the outer part that covers the mouth, nose and chin. Put it in a plastic bag, close the bag and throw it in the undifferentiated garbage.

If you have a washable mask, wash it carefully with a disinfectant detergent and let it dry before using it again.

Remember: in addition to using the mask, when coughing or sneezing cover your nose and mouth, and wash your hands thoroughly.

IN DEPTH INFORMATION



How to use disposable gloves



Before putting on the gloves, wash your hands thoroughly. If you are not at home, disinfect your hands with an alcohol-based gel (see the sections on handwashing and home hygiene).

When you take them off, you have to turn them over: the external part must be on the inside.

Then put them in a plastic bag, close it tightly, and throw it in the undifferentiated garbage.

Wash your hands immediately or disinfect them with an alcohol-based gel.

How to wear disposable gloves

[Link to Video](#)

IN DEPTH INFORMATION



Advice for home hygiene

Recommendations for a good air quality

Frequently open the windows (when the car traffic is lightest, if you live in a busy area). Be careful: the elderly person should not be exposed to sudden changes in temperature and drafts.

Open the windows after using household cleaning products, as these often contain irritating or toxic substances.

For air exchange in windowless environments (such as storerooms, bathrooms, etc.) use fans, if there are any (see How to clean grids and filters, on [page 28](#)).

Adjust the temperature and humidity of the air in the rooms using ceramic or electric humidifiers, which should always be kept clean.

If there are heating / cooling systems such as heat pumps and convectors, clean or replace the filters regularly (see How to clean grids and filters).

Avoid the use of air fresheners: they emit chemical substances damaging for your health and the environment.

How to air your home. [Link to Video](#)

How to clean grids and filters

The air vents should be cleaned frequently. If the grids covering the vents are removable, they should be washed with disinfectant soap and water, removing any trace of detergent and leaving them to dry before reassembling them.

If the filters for air conditioners and heat pumps can be removed from the appliance, wash them with water and disinfectant soap. Take care to remove all traces of detergent and allow them to dry before reassembling.

For aerators, air conditioners and heat pumps, **never use detergents or sanitizers directly on the grids and filters if they are not removable.** In this case, clean and disinfect them with a cloth moistened with 70% alcohol.

Advice for domestic cleaning

At home, clean the surfaces you touch most often every day (such as doors, windows, handles, tables, light switches, toilets, faucets, sinks, chairs and armchairs, mobile phones, remote controls, etc.)



When using cleaning products, follow the instructions on the label.

Never mix cleaning products (such as laundry detergents and products to remove stains or disinfect clothes) if not explicitly indicated on the label.

Use all products with caution, always wearing gloves and avoiding squirts and splashes during cleaning.

To disinfect washable surfaces in the home, such as floors, sinks, and sanitary items, use bleach diluted in water or 70% alcohol.

Attention: products like bleach (chlorine-based) cannot be used with all materials: wood, steel, polyurethane, iron and metals in general should not be cleaned with bleach; for these surfaces, use specific detergents.

How to prepare diluted bleach

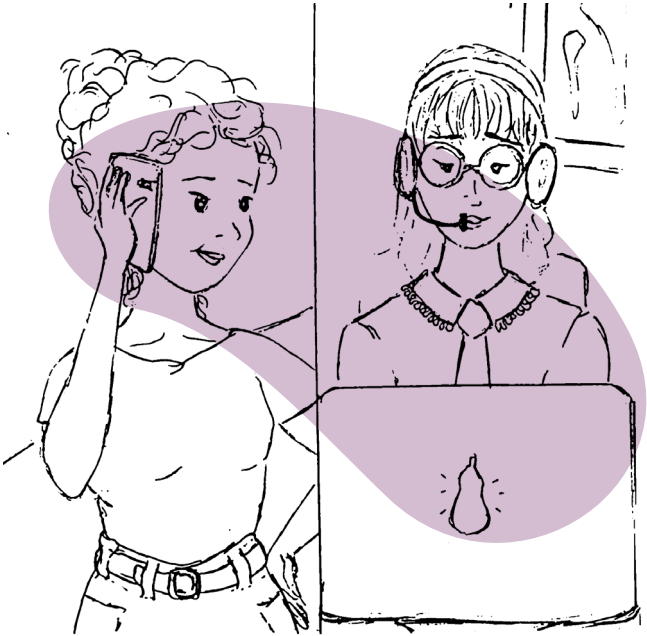
To disinfect floors, sinks and sanitary ware, dilute a glass of bleach (approximately 200 ml) in 2 litres of water.

To disinfect other washable surfaces, dilute one glass of bleach (approximately 200 ml) in 6 litres of water.

To disinfect small surfaces that can be damaged by bleach, use alcohol: buy denatured ethyl alcohol (pink-coloured) with a 70% concentration.

Read the label to make sure that it is appropriate for the surface you want to clean. You have to use it directly, without diluting it.

USEFUL CONTACTS&LINKS



If you have difficulties with the Italian language:

- call friends or relatives who know how to do it and ask them to help you.
- Phone or e-mail **CEPSAG** (Centro di Ricerca Promozione e Sviluppo dell'Assistenza Geriatrica Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Roma)
Monday-Friday, 9.00-12.00
tel **06/30156695**
e-mail: **info.cepsag@gmail.com**

If you need help for yourself or the elderly person you are caring for:

- Public utility number of the Ministry of Health: **1500**
- Emergency numbers, only in case of serious need: **112** or **118#**
- Italian Red Cross: **800 06 55 10**
- Phone numbers made available by your municipality or region (see the appropriate websites).

If you need psychological help:

- Toll-free number **800 991 414**, for elderly people. Active every day (including Saturdays and Sundays), from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- Toll-free number **800 065 510** of the Italian Red Cross. It offers psychological support to persons of all ages.
- Website of the Ministry of Health that reports on national and regional initiatives to provide psychological support to the population: [Link](#).

If you want further information about coronavirus, here are some useful links:

Health Ministry:

www.salute.gov.it/nuovocoronavirus

Istituto Superiore di Sanità:

www.iss.it/coronavirus

www.epicentro.iss.it/coronavirus

World Health Organization:

www.who.int

Website of Progetto Casa Si Cura - Campagna sulla salute e sicurezza per i collaboratori domestici stranieri in Italia: [Link al sito](#)

Website of the National Council of the Order of Psychologists, with suggestions on how to manage negative emotions related to the health emergency:

www.psy.it/psicologi-contro-la-paura

All of these precautions will help protect you and the person you are caring for.

The coronavirus is a problem that will stay with us for many months. Therefore, the hygiene rules and advice in this guide should become part of our daily habits, even when we will be able to leave the house and resume, at least partially, our normal life.

**All together,
we can succeed.**

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