

Guidelines for Self-Isolation

Chen Shen and Yaneer Bar-Yam
New England Complex Systems Institute
September 4, 2021

This guideline is for individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 but have mild or no symptoms. Mild symptoms include low fever, mild fatigue, coughing, but without pneumonia symptoms and with no accompanying chronic illness.

Where local medical resources are strained and cannot hospitalize individuals with moderate or even worse symptoms, this document can also provide guidance. Please keep in mind that advice provided here is designed for mild/no symptom individuals.

Once symptoms develop, including difficulties in breathing, high fever, seek medical care immediately.

GENERAL

- Recognize that most cases resolve with a full return to health. Isolation is a temporary necessity, typically for 14 days.
- **It is strongly advised to live alone, at least in a separate bedroom and using a separate bathroom.**

IF YOU ARE LIVING ALONE

- Keep close track of your health condition. Keep a health log with clear handwriting in an obvious place. The log should include: record date & time, heart rate, blood oxygen saturation (taken by oximeter), any symptoms, meals, medicine taken and dosage.
- Keep abreast of local information on what to do when symptoms progress. Have key contacts in speed dial. Set up check-in (at least daily) with a family member/friends. Inform them of all the emergency contact information, as well as any information needed to get into your home in case you are incapacitated.
- Take care of your health with sufficient hydration, eat a balanced diet, and sleep regular hours. Maintain or develop fun or educational activities including reading, solitary or online games, or other online interactions.
- Wash your hands frequently, with soap / hand sanitizer for no less than 20 seconds each time.
- Regular ventilation of the living area is crucial. Where possible run one or more HEPA air purifiers continuously.
- Wash bed sheets, towels and clothing frequently. Separate yours from others.
- Avoid contact with your pet and other animals. If not possible, ensure you wear mask and wash hands before/after interacting with pets.
- Isolate yourself from any physical contact with others, but stay in touch with family and friends by text, phone, video chats, or other electronic means. This is important for many reasons including maintaining a positive outlook.
- If news about the pandemic gives you anxieties, try not to focus too much on it.
- Make a relatively consistent daily routine. If possible, keep a moderate or even small amount of physical exercises.
- Coordinate with family friends, or local authorities the logistics of delivery of essentials including daily meals.

Keep track of all essentials and be aware of the time each will run short, anticipate and inform suppliers in advance. No-contact drop off is best. A mask and gloves are required whenever interacting with delivery people.

- Consult with local authorities and health care providers about the duration and condition for ending self-isolation. Systematically clean, wash, and launder before exiting. Exercise caution even after ending the self-isolation.
- In suburban or rural areas where exiting and entering the home is possible without contact with others, or shared spaces, taking walks in isolation from others can be done. Don't forget that you are in quarantine and don't interact with others or go into spaces where others are likely to be, either when you are there or later.

IF YOU SHARE LODGING WITH SOMEONE ELSE

- The people who share lodging with you are considered "close contacts," and should follow local guideline regarding close contacts, including avoiding unnecessary contact with others.
- The other residents in the lodging should avoid having visitors, especially vulnerable people (seniors, or those with chronic disease). Any visitor should be informed about the presence of an isolating individual.
- Clearly define, with visual aids if possible, different zones in the residence. The bedroom and facilities used by the patient is considered a Red Zone. Areas connected with the Red Zone, for example the living room, are considered Yellow Zones. Other separated rooms are Green Zones.
- The patient should strictly follow sneeze etiquette, sneezing into disposable tissues that are safely discarded, or into clothing (e.g. sleeve) that is soon washed.
- Set up a communication mechanism in the household so the patient can inform the other residents when he/she has to leave the their room.
- The patient should disinfect Red Zones regularly. Other cohabitants disinfect the Yellow Zones, and preferably Green Zones, regularly.
- The patient should limit himself/herself to the Red Zone, minimizing entry into Yellow Zones. Completely avoid Green Zone. Objects in close contact with the patient should also follow this rule. Outside the Red Zone, the patient should wear gloves and a mask.
- Where other residents enter Yellow or Red Zones high quality masks (double masks, N95/KN95 masks, elastomeric half masks or masks) should be worn. In the Red Zone, and where possible in the Yellow zone, gloves should be worn.
- Consider the air flow in the home and if air flow is going from Red Zone to Yellow Zone block the airflow, e.g. under doors. Open windows to promote ventilation in all zones but avoid opening two windows that are close to each other in Red and other zones.
- Possible transmission routes: Shared facilities: kitchen, bathroom, etc. Shared household supplies: towel, glasses,

utensils, etc. Shared food, beverages, etc. Surfaces touched: door handle, table surface, remote control, light switches, etc. These should be disinfected at least once a day.

- Patient should clean after using any shared facility, especially the bathroom. Keep the toilet lid shut when not being used. Regularly pour bleach into the toilet.
- Patient should have a separate garbage bag/bin for disposing gloves, masks, tissues, etc.
- If possible, cohabitant should help to deliver food and other packages of the patient to their door, to minimize patient's need to leave the Red Zone.