

HOW TO AVOID GETTING COVID-19 *(Compiled from a variety of sources)*

The most important way to protect yourself is to avoid being exposed to COVID-19. Stay at home as much as possible and avoid areas where people gather. Avoid unnecessary travel, and follow guidance on travel restrictions.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, about the amount of time it would take to hum the Happy Birthday song from beginning to end twice. If soap and water is not available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. The best way to clean your hands, though, is through soap and water.

In addition to washing your hands frequently, it's important to:

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.
- Practice respiratory hygiene. Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.
- Maintain social distancing. Keep at least 6 feet distance between yourself and anyone else, especially anyone who is coughing or sneezing. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean frequently touched objects and surfaces with household cleaning spray or wipes. These surfaces and objects include doorknobs, counters, toilets, keyboards, tablets, phones, light switches, and more.

Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority. National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.

Basic protective measures against the new coronavirus. Stay aware of the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak, available on the WHO website and through your national and local public health authority. Most people who become infected experience mild illness and recover, but it can be more severe for others.

Are people with cancer at a higher risk?

Yes. People in active treatment are at higher risk of getting very sick because they have compromised immune systems. Hormonal therapy does not affect the immune system, but chemotherapy decreases the number of white blood cells, and affects immunity. Immunotherapy, some targeted therapies, and radiation can also affect the immune system. Patients who are not receiving active cancer treatment also need to be cautious as the effects of prior therapy are usually long-lasting.

What extra precautions should breast cancer patients take?

Breast cancer patients should take extra precautions to minimize the risk of getting COVID-19. In addition to the general preventive measures listed above, patients should:

- Stock up on necessary medications and supplies that can last for a few weeks.
- Avoid crowds and non-essential travel.
- Stay at home as much as possible.

Boosting the immune system by keeping stress levels low, getting adequate sleep, moderate physical exercise, and good nutrition can also be helpful.

Assistance Programs for Cancer Patients

- **PAN Foundation COVID-19 Fund** - www.panfoundation.org/covid-19-financial-support-fund. Medicare patients living with cancer can apply for \$300 to help with living expenses.
- **CancerCare Financial Assistance** - www.cancercare.org/financial. Assistance to help with costs including food, medications, general household expenses, transportation, home care and child care.
- **Patient Advocacy Foundation's COVID Recovery Fund** - www.patientadvocate.org/covidcare/help. Small grants for living expenses for individuals recovering from COVID-19.
- **HealthWell Foundation COVID-19 Ancillary Costs Fund** - www.healthwellfoundation.org/fund/covid-19-fund. Up to \$250 grant for high risk individuals for costs associated with delivered food, medication, diagnostics, transportation and telehealth.

In response to the current pandemic, some drug manufacturers are providing copay relief to patients taking their medications. We've listed a few resources below. Check with the pharmaceutical company that produces your medication to see if they have a patient support program.

- **Bristol Myers Squibb** - www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200407005252/en
- **Pfizer** - www.pfizerrxpathways.com