



## Guidance for Older Adults & People with Underlying Medical Conditions

To protect the health and safety of our most vulnerable citizens, the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) is issuing the following interim guidance for older adults (age 65 and older) and people with underlying medical conditions, who may be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Recommendations may be revised as more information becomes available.

### Who is most at risk?

Older adults (age 65 and older) and those with underlying medical conditions are at greatest risk for severe illness from COVID-19. High-risk conditions include:

- Chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
- Serious heart condition
- Immunocompromising conditions
- Severe obesity
- Diabetes
- Renal failure
- Liver disease

At this point, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes it. If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because you are 65 or older or because you have underlying medical conditions, it is very important for you to take action to reduce your risk of contracting COVID-19.

### STAY AT HOME

Governor Carney has issued a Stay-at-Home Order which means you should only leave the house for essential purposes. Recognizing that older adults and those with underlying medical conditions are at greatest risk for serious illness from COVID-19, **we are asking this vulnerable population to stay at home as much as possible until the order is lifted.** Instead of leaving the house, please ask your family, friends or a neighbor to conduct everyday activities, like going to the grocery store or pharmacy, on your behalf.

## ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT

If you do not have family, friends or a neighbor who can help you at this time, DPH will support vulnerable populations by providing information about alternative measures for conducting everyday activities. Contact 2-1-1 to be connected with a free volunteer who can help coordinate basic needs. To be connected with a 2-1-1 volunteer, Dial 2-1-1 or 1-800-560-3372. You may also text your Zip Code to 898-211. Volunteers will conduct free Wellness Check Calls for older adults and people with underlying medical conditions. During the call, we will assess your needs and develop a plan to ensure your needs are met so that you do not have to leave your home.

## GET TESTED IF YOU DISPLAY SYMPTOMS

People with COVID-19 may have mild to severe respiratory illness. Symptoms can include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you have a fever **and** cough **or** experience difficulty breathing, contact your primary care provider to request COVID-19 testing. You **must** have a referral from your primary care provider to receive testing. If you do not have a primary care provider, call the DPH Call Center at 1-866-408-1899. Symptoms may appear 2–14 days after exposure to the virus. It is important to recognize that other respiratory diseases (e.g., common cold and influenza) may be circulating in the community at the same time as COVID-19.

## HELP SLOW THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

The most effective way to slow the spread of COVID-19 is to stay at home and avoid all non-essential travel. You can also take the following protective measures:

- Avoid touching your face, nose, and eyes.
- To the extent possible, avoid common spaces and touching high-touch surfaces, such as, elevator buttons, door handles, handrails.
- Avoid using handshakes to greet others.
- Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand if you must come in contact with a high-touch surface.
- Keep a 6-foot distance between yourself and others.
- Clean and disinfect your home regularly, especially frequently touched surfaces – tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, cell phones, keyboards, your computer mouse, and phones.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds regularly, especially after being in a public space. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains 60–95% alcohol.

For the latest Delaware updates:  
[de.gov/coronavirus](https://de.gov/coronavirus)

## **FIND WAYS TO COPE WITH STRESS AND ANXIETY**

It is normal for people to experience stress and anxiety about the COVID-19 pandemic. To cope with this, it is important to find ways to relax and remain socially connected while practicing social distancing. To support your emotional well-being during this time:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories and social media.
- Contact your family and friends by phone or video-conferencing technology.
- Take care of your body.
- Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
- Exercise regularly from the safety of your home.
- Go outside and get fresh air, while practicing social distancing.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind.
- Try to do stimulating activities you enjoy.
- Connect with your faith-based institution online.

Call your primary care provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row. If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others call 9-1-1 immediately. If you are having a psychiatric or substance abuse crisis and need assistance, please contact Mobile Crisis Intervention Services:

- Northern Delaware Hotline, call: 800-652-2929
- Southern Delaware Hotline, call: 800-345-6785

## **PROTECT YOURSELF FROM COVID-19 SCAMS**

Unfortunately, it is common for people to exploit vulnerable populations during national emergencies. Stay vigilant of potential scams and take the following precautions:

- Never give out your social security number or bank account information over the phone or by email.
- Beware of fraudulent products claiming to provide a cure to COVID-19.
- Beware of calls or emails from individuals claiming to represent local, state or federal agencies.
- Avoid giving money to charities you do not know.

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- Be wary of new investment opportunities.
- Only allow people you expect into your home (i.e. scheduled meal delivery service).

Report scams, fraud, or price gouging, etc. to the Department of Justice (DOJ) Consumer Protection Unit through a formal complaint. Complaint forms can be found at [de.gov/consumer](https://de.gov/consumer) and should be submitted along with any supporting documentation to [consumer.protection@delaware.gov](mailto:consumer.protection@delaware.gov). If you have additional questions, you can contact the DOJ's Consumer Protection Hotline at (800) 220-5424.

## References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). People Who Need Extra Precautions. Available online at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

National Council on Aging. (2020) COVID-19 Resources for Older Adults & Caregivers. Available online at <https://www.ncoa.org/covid-19>.

## LOCAL RESOURCE GUIDE

Below is a summary of local resources that can provide support to older adults and people with underlying conditions.

### **DELAWARE 2-1-1**

Delaware 2-1-1 provides one central resource for access to the health and human service organizations. You can search for local resources on their website at [www.delaware211.org](https://www.delaware211.org) or contact 2-1-1 by call or text for support. Just dial 2-1-1 or 1-800-560-3372. You may also text your Zip Code to 898-211. Delaware 2-1-1 can help you coordinate food delivery and identify ways to meet other everyday needs.

### **THE DELAWARE AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER**

The Delaware Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) is a one-stop access point for information and services for older persons and adults with physical disabilities throughout the State. The ADRC can help you learn more about available resources, decide what services would be best for you and find the services that you need. Locate services in your county using their online search tool, available at [www.delawareadrc.com](https://www.delawareadrc.com), or call the ADRC at 1-800-223-9074.

For the latest Delaware updates:  
[de.gov/coronavirus](https://de.gov/coronavirus)

## **MEDICAID BENEFITS**

You may be eligible for Medicaid benefits to support you during the COVID-19 outbreak and beyond. To obtain full Medicaid benefits in Delaware, you must be a Delaware resident and either a U.S. citizen or a legally residing noncitizen. Full coverage for noncitizens is dependent on the availability of state funding. However, noncitizens (residing legally or illegally) can qualify for coverage for emergencies and labor & delivery services if income requirements are met.

Qualifying for Medicaid is also based on need. Household income must be under certain limits that depend on family size. For long-term care programs, financial resources must also be under a certain amount. There are also specific programs for individuals who meet certain medical or disability tests.

To find out more about different Medicaid and other medical assistance programs, visit the Division of Medicaid & Medical Assistance Programs & Services website at: <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dmma/medicaid.html>. You can find out if you qualify for Medicaid or other medical assistance and social service programs by speaking with a representative at your local State Service Center. Call Medicaid Customer Relations at 1-800-372-2022 or (302) 255-9500 to be directed to the appropriate office where someone can help you. You can also apply for health and social service programs online using the Delaware ASSIST application, available at: <https://assist.dhss.delaware.gov>.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

While we encourage older adults to stay at home and make alternative arrangements to meet your everyday needs, transportation is available for people who must leave the house for essential purposes. Older adults (65 and over) can complete the “elderly only” Paratransit application available at <https://tinyurl.com/elderlyapplication>.

If you have any questions, call 1-800-652-3278 and select “option 4.”

For Paratransit hours of operation, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/paratransithours>.

## **GENERAL UPDATES FOR OLDER ADULTS**

The Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) will share relevant updates on closures/schedule Modifications for Adult Day Programs, Senior Centers, and Other Community Programs on their website at [www.dhss.delaware.gov/dsaapd/covid\\_19\\_dsaapd\\_information.html](http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dsaapd/covid_19_dsaapd_information.html).

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