

COVID 19 – be prepared – guidance for those caring for people with Profound and Multiple learning disabilities and those with a learning disability and other significant physical health problems

Explainer – Covid 19 is the illness caused by the new Coronavirus

Concerned that the person you care for may have Covid 19

The symptoms of Covid 19 are: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms-and-what-to-do/> .

- A new, continuous cough or worsening of an existing cough -- **and/or**
- Fever – temperature higher than 37.8 or skin that feels hot to touch on the chest or back

Other symptoms can be

- Breathlessness – normal number of breaths per minute is 12-20 – you may notice this because the person cannot speak in full sentences, struggles to eat or drink normally, is more distressed when lying down
- Fatigue or feeling very tired/having less energy – you may notice this because the person engages less, sleeps more, moves less
- Headaches – as with any pain you may notice changes in behaviour, agitation, rocking and other features well known to you when the person you care for is in pain
- Sore throat – may cause refusal to eat or drink, drinking more, massaging throat
- Aches and pains – you may notice this again because the person moves less or by changes in behaviour caused by pain and distress.
- Changes in skin appearance – if the person has a fever this may be clammy and hot or clammy and cold. The skin may be very pale or very flushed.
- Change in smell and taste – you may notice distaste for foods that were previously liked

The DISDAT tool can help especially as it helps you know what is normal for the person you care for https://www.wamhinpc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Dis%20DAT_Tool.pdf

Spotting early signs of deterioration in health in the person that you care for

This helps you to detect whether the person is becoming sicker and you need to call emergency services for help. It is most important to have a record of what the person is like when well so that you can score the changes – **BASELINE READINGS**

Familiarise yourself with knowing the soft signs of change using RESTORE 2 – this has been designed for people in care homes but applies well to others. Don't forget to compare with how the person is when well. file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/CS50656-RESTORE2-Mini-A5_A4.pdf

RESTORE = Recognise Early Soft Signs, Take Observations, Respond, Escalate

This also includes SBARD – it helps you to be clear when contacting a health professional when you are concerned about deterioration. It makes sure you have all the relevant information available before making the call. The call will be shorter and your concerns will be clearly heard.

See HEE videos on how to take measurements - appendix

If you want to do a more thorough assessment then - use the full RESTORE2 and NEWS2 chart
[file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/CS49286-RESTORE2-full-version%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/CS49286-RESTORE2-full-version%20(1).pdf)

NEWS stands for National Early Warning Score – it is used by all health professionals to work out how sick a person is.

Always make sure you have measured these when the person you look after is well so that you can see the difference - **BASELINE READINGS**

To use this tool you will need to be able to measure -

- Temperature – have a thermometer available
- Oxygen levels - consider buying oximeter
- Blood pressure - consider BP monitor
- Purchasing equipment – there are various medical equipment suppliers available online but it may be difficult to access sites at present due to excess demand

If you don't have any equipment then record

- Does skin feel hot, cold or normal – touch the back or chest
- Count the number of breaths taken per minute
- Check the pulse rate – number of beats per minute if you are able
- Use the ACVPU chart to assess consciousness (on left side of the NEWS2 chart)

Have SBARD available – helps to ensure that emergency services take your communication seriously - see chart on link. Using the tool helps you decide when to call **999**.

Ensure you have easy access to the list of medicines the person is taking.

Ensure you know all the health problems the person has.

Ensure you are familiar with the person's emergency plan if they have one. Good advice here about creating your own emergency plan - <https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/practical-support/planning-for-emergencies>

Does the person you care for, have a **hospital passport**? If not consider creating one. Here is an example to use <https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/health-guides> .

What to do if you think the person you care for may have Covid 19

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

If possible, use the Covid 19 checker tool <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19> - if the person's symptoms are mild the tool will advise that the person stays at home. The questions will help you to sort out if the person is too sick to stay at home. **CHECK REGULARLY FOR DETERIORATION**

If you don't have access to this then call 111 but lines may be very busy. Call **999** if you think the person is seriously ill – see 'check for deterioration'

Looking after someone who is likely to have COVID 19

- Plenty to drink to prevent dehydration - urine must be a pale yellow colour
- Dehydration can cause constipation and therefore pain and behaviour change

- Dehydration can also make the person seem confused
- Use Paracetamol to manage the fever and aches and pains
- Plenty of rest though be aware if the person is becoming excessively drowsy.
- Consider protection for yourself when you are providing personal care - wear a disposable apron and gloves if possible and protect your face
- Guidance for home care providers <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-residential-care-supported-living-and-home-care-guidance/covid-19-guidance-on-home-care-provision>
- USE THE TOOLS LISTED ABOVE TO CHECK THE PERSON IS NOT GETTING WORSE
- If concerned call **999** if the person is breathless, excessively drowsy or **you are worried about deterioration/getting worse, having done a check**

Self-isolation

If you or the person you care for or anyone else in the household gets sick with possible Covid19, then you must isolate.

- The person who is sick must stay in the house for 7 days from the start of being unwell
- Everyone else in the household must stay at home for 14 days –
- If you catch the infection during those 14 days then you must stay at home for another minimum of 7 days
- You must aim to stay at least 2 metres away from other people in the house during this time. This may not be possible if you have to give direct care. Consider whether you should use any personal protection

Is the person that you care for at very high risk? –

Many people with a learning disability will have other health problems that may increase their risk. There is, as yet, no information to determine which of these problems carries the greatest risk of Covid 19.

- Lung problems – repeated chest infections, pneumonia and aspiration pneumonia especially needing hospital admission, asthma – especially severe asthma
- Mobility problems that have an impact on lung problems eg spinal problems causing scoliosis (rotated spine causing abnormal chest shape) for example, bed bound, unable to sit unaided, needing hoisting for care
- Swallowing difficulties and gastro-oesophageal reflux that may exacerbate lung problems, choking
- PEG or nasogastric tube feeding that may also risk aspiration
- Risk of infection increased because of poorer immunity
- Diabetes
- Severe obesity
- Heart and blood vessel problems – high blood pressure, heart disease, congenital heart disease(heart problems the person was born with)
- Being over 70 yrs old
- Kidney disease
- Liver disease

<https://patient.info/news-and-features/covid-19-what-is-a-risk-group>

Contacting general practice – most general practices are adopting telephone triage – in other words you have to speak to the practice by phone first to be told what to do.

- There is little routine work happening in practices as most staff are managing the Covid 19 emergencies (routine work might be annual health checks, other routine checks for illnesses like diabetes)
- Don't go in person to the practice
- You must phone
- **If you are phoning on behalf of someone else, the GP should ask to speak directly with the person and assess their capacity. If that is not possible describe steps you have taken in relation to the person's capacity to give consent. Do you have a Lasting Power of Attorney, is there a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard in place (DOLS), does the person you care for have a Court of Protection Order in place**
- Make sure you state that the person you care for has a learning disability and complex health problems
- The person you care for may need to see a GP for another sort of problem – such as abdominal pain or problems linked to the person's other health issues
- Be prepared for the fact that the doctor or nurse that you see may be wearing Personal Protective Equipment – mask, apron and gloves
- The person you care for may need supplies of repeat prescriptions
- <https://patient.info/news-and-features/covid-19-coronavirus-what-to-do-if-you-need-to-see-a-gp-or-get-medication>

General Covid 19 advice

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

- Here's how to wash your hands <https://vimeo.com/134952598>
- Excellent guidance for carers <https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/looking-after-your-health/coronavirus-covid-19>
- Charities that you normally work with are providing lots of information – look at their websites. The NHS is also bringing together guidance for you. Here is Mencap's easy read guide <https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/coronavirus-covid-19>