



CANCERcare®

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fact sheet

MANAGING THE PRACTICAL CONCERNS OF SOCIAL DISTANCING

As the coronavirus is highly infectious and symptoms may not be apparent in those who have it, vulnerable populations are advised to be extremely cautious. Social distancing, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is the practice of reducing direct contact with others as much as possible, even caregivers and other loved ones. This involves staying indoors and maintaining six feet of distance from anyone else when outside.

TIPS FOR REMAINING AT HOME

One of the simplest ways to remain inside is to have a caregiver or other volunteer run errands for you. Delivery of groceries and everyday supplies may also be available through a local supermarket, from national chains or via dedicated grocery delivery services. For contact-free drop-off, the delivery person will alert you when they arrive and leave your goods in a secure area outside your home.

Should anyone need to enter your residence, have them wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds immediately, limit the areas they enter and, above all, have them wear a mask, which will help limit the spread of the coronavirus. Common surfaces in your home should be cleaned often with common household disinfectants or a bleach and water solution. While it is not known whether the virus can survive handling in the mail, it is best to treat letters, packages and other items delivered from outside the home with caution. Any items not shrink-wrapped should be wiped down, including the exterior of boxes.

Thankfully, keeping up with friends, family and members of your support network is very easy nowadays. Use programs such as FaceTime, Skype and Zoom to see people face-to-face, or continue to use phone calls, text and email.

Keeping in touch is also important for making accommodations with your caregiver and updating them about your treatment. Finding alternative ways to stay connected with friends and family without leaving your home helps lower your risk of exposure to the coronavirus.

REDUCING YOUR RISK IN PUBLIC

If you must run errands yourself, buy in bulk in order to reduce the number of trips, including household supplies and foods that are less perishable and easily stored, like peanut butter and canned goods. A walk or other mild exercise outside is advised only within reason.

The coronavirus can survive on surfaces for hours. Cover your hand with a cloth or sleeve when needing to touch high-contact objects such as elevator buttons, hand rails, faucets or door handles. Refrain from touching your face, as the virus can enter through your eyes, mouth or nostrils. Cloth face coverings or masks are highly recommended for all individuals when in public; these should be washed after each use.

Once you return home, wash your hands immediately and thoroughly with soap and water. Hand sanitizers with a 70% alcohol content are a secondary option. Disinfect any surfaces in your home that have been touched by outside objects with a household cleaner or a diluted bleach solution (the CDC recommends 1/3 cup bleach per gallon of water).

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MAINTAINING YOUR CANCER TREATMENT

Many resources are being shifted to address COVID-19, including doctors and nurses, in addition to the hazards of clinical settings handling the outbreak. Accordingly, some cancer treatments may be postponed or adjusted, including the opportunity for oral chemotherapy. Many doctors are practicing telemedicine, which is the use of video-conferencing instead of in-person appointments, in order to reduce the risks of exposure.

Consider prescription delivery services, if available. Ask your doctor if they would suggest filling a larger prescription than you usually receive – a 60-day supply instead of a 30-day supply, for example. Some pharmacies are also waiving delivery fees at this time. If switching to oral chemotherapy, be sure to ask your doctors what to do if you miss a dose. Finally, if you continue clinical visits, ask about changes to visitation rules and other policies of the facility before you go. Above all, communicate with your team to keep updated on adjustments and make sure they know your concerns.

CHANGES TO YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT

If you lose your job, are furloughed or have other work issues, local food banks and government assistance may be able to help. Act quickly in these measures, as unemployment has risen and various departments have many applications to process. If you have lost your insurance, you may be eligible for COBRA, which extends an employer's coverage for a certain period of time, or you may qualify for Medicare or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). State-based insurance exchanges will often be re-opened for those experiencing a loss of income. Consult www.healthcare.gov/unemployed/coverage for more details on all of the above.

CancerCare may be able to help with co-payments and other forms of assistance. To speak with a master's-prepared oncology social worker, call our toll-free Hopeline at 800-813-HOPE (4673). To learn about co-pay assistance, call the CancerCare Co-Payment Assistance Foundation at 866-55-COPAY (866-552-6729).



COPING WITH EMOTIONAL CONCERNS

These changes can be overwhelming. Try not to let the situation overwhelm you. Break any obstacles into smaller parts to handle piece by piece, which makes it easier to tackle individual parts rather than an unsolvable whole. For the mental aspects of social distancing, including tips on peaceful activities and mindfulness, read CancerCare's companion fact sheet "Managing the Emotional Impacts of Social Distancing."

CancerCare® Can Help

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include case management, counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by master's-prepared oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit www.cancercare.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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