

## Health Tips for Seniors

If you are an older adult and/or have a severe chronic medical condition such as diabetes, heart or lung disease, you are at a higher risk for more serious COVID-19 illness. It is very important for you to protect yourself and take the steps needed to remain healthy.

Highland geriatrician, Dr. Daniel Mendelson says the most important advice he can give seniors is:

- **Embrace social distancing.** This is one of the hardest thing we all have to do, but it is working and it is the most important thing to protect you, your family, and our whole community. It doesn't mean you have to be lonely. Learn to use video calling like FaceTime, send emails, use your phone for live conversations, and loving texts. It's a different way of life, but it can be fulfilling – and it's not forever.
- **Wash your hands.** Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds every time. Do this when you normally wash them and other times like after touching counters, cans, other household items, or your phone. Transfer from shared surfaces to our hands is the number one way that we contract COVID-19 disease. If you don't have soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- **Don't touch your face.** That includes your eyes, nose, and mouth! That is how germs spread the fastest!
- **Stay hydrated and eat healthy.** Drink plenty of water and try to eat healthy foods. Have your groceries delivered or have someone pick up for you and leave at your door.
- **Stay mentally active.** Watch television, but not news reports all day. Read books. Do crossword puzzles. Play online games. Write down your thoughts and feelings. Stay socially active while keeping physically distant.
- **Help others.** You can do this from your own home. Call friends who are more isolated. Cheer up those who are missing their families too. Make fabric masks to share or donate.
- **Keep an eye on your health.** Take your regular medications. Get up and walk around – even if it's just inside your house. When you have questions or symptoms you don't understand call your doctor. There are other health concerns than COVID-19 and we are here to help you!
- **Keep your spirits up!** We have come so far and if we all practice these recommendations we can get to the other side and be with our family and friends in a healthy world again!

## Your Mental Health is a Priority

It's always important to take care of your mental health as well as your physical health. And even if you don't have the coronavirus, you may know someone who does or you may be worried about getting it. Uncertainties about work and not knowing when you can see your family and friends again can make you anxious and upset.

Some of these feelings are to be expected but they can get overwhelming. There are steps you can take to try to stay as calm as possible and create a life for yourself that adapts to the current new normal: Susan McDaniel, Ph.D., Family/Health Psychologist from Highland Family Medicine has some suggestions:

- Make a routine for yourself (and your family) and keep to it. Be sure to make time every day for some pleasurable activities.
- While physically distanced, stay socially connected. Sometimes we wish we weren't so tied to our cell phones or computers, but now they can be a welcome method of communication.
- Eat well, sleep well, and exercise. If you are in quarantine or isolation that might be hard but walk around the inside of your space if you can and try to incorporate some exercises.
- Find something meaningful to contribute—to family, friends, your workplace, your community. Staying connected is key. Everyone needs encouragement and reassurance during this time.
- Monitor yourself for interpersonal signs of stress (irritability, impatience, etc.). Pause and ask yourself if your stress is leaking out and hurting others (and yourself). If so, apologize and extend a good amount of grace to yourself, and everyone around you. No one can be their best self *all* the time, especially during a crisis.
- If you are unable to cope with your feelings it is important that you contact your primary care clinician or psychotherapist.