



COVID-19 Guidance for Older (60+) Populations in Utah

Who is the guidance for?

This document provides interim guidance specific to older populations (60 years old and older) during the outbreak of novel coronavirus disease 2019 (abbreviated “COVID-19”) to protect the health and safety of older people in our communities. Recommendations may be revised as more information becomes available.

Why is the guidance being issued?

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) virus, and we are learning more about it every day. There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. Early information out of China, where COVID-19 first started, shows that some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. This includes older adults, as well as those with conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, who also tend to be older adults. At this point, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes it. Stopping spread (transmission) of the virus through everyday practices is the best way to keep yourself healthy.

If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because you are more than 60 years old or because you have a serious long-term health problem, it is very important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of getting sick with the disease. Because Utah has recommended that those most at risk for COVID-19 avoid large crowds, mass events, and non-essential use of highly traveled public spaces, we want to support these populations by providing information about alternative measures for conducting everyday activities.

This document will cover how to make alternative arrangements for work and daily transportation (including journey to work), social and religious activities, healthcare needs, and any in-home care or services that you might receive.

Symptoms of COVID-19

Patients with COVID-19 may have mild to severe respiratory illness. Symptoms can include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. 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.

Key Recommendations

- If you are working, telework as much as possible and avoid taking public transport to work.
- If your usual social functions are canceled, develop routines with friends, such as daily check-ins on the phone, or cooking, watching television and playing games together online or on Skype.
- Find a way to watch church, synagogue, or other worship/prayer services on television or online.
- For non-essential services (e.g., cleaning) that you receive at home, try to find an alternative.
- For essential services that you get routinely at home, try to make any transactions (e.g., orders, payments, pickups) remotely (e.g., online), through a door, or outside.
- Inquire with your health providers about telemedicine options and prescription delivery.

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Work duties and transportation needs

Although some older adults may be retired, many are part of the workforce. Your continued attendance at work will depend on your personal history of travel or contact with individuals who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, as well as your employer's protocols during the outbreak.

Possible Challenges

- CDC has recommended that all persons, and especially those over 60, have been advised to avoid non-essential travel to regions (e.g., China, Italy, Japan, Iran, South Korea and most of Europe) where there is sustained community transmission of COVID-19. If you have recently traveled to one of these locations, your employer may require you to telework (if the job allows for telework) or place you on administrative leave while you comply with a required 14-day isolation requirement upon your return to the United States.
- Similarly, you will also have to fulfill a 14-day isolation requirement if you know that you were in close contact with someone who had a confirmed case of COVID-19.
- You may also opt to voluntarily isolate yourself regardless of potential exposure to COVID-19 because of your risk profile (e.g., age or a pre-existing chronic illness or respiratory issue).

Proposed Arrangements

When staying home from work:

- Management should allow you to telework if that is an option. Telework as much as possible. If teleworking is not an option, management may require you to use your own leave (annual, sick, comp, or excess time) or go on leave without pay.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough and shortness of breath) and had significant risk exposure for COVID-19, stay home and consult via remote media health care providers (e.g., telehealth).
- If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 during a 14-day or unspecified isolation period, contact your HR Director or HR Specialist who will evaluate the use of sick leave/FMLA as appropriate. Follow instructions from your physician or the public health agency monitoring your care for the remainder of treatment.

If going to work:

- Avoid all contact with sick coworkers.
- To the extent possible, avoid common spaces in the workplace 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 or finger if you must touch something.
- Keep a 6-foot distance between yourself and coworkers.
- Clean and disinfect your workspace 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.
- Avoid touching your face, nose, and eyes.

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Getting yourself to work or other functions:

- You should avoid public transportation, such as buses, Frontrunner (trains), TRAX (light rail systems), and Uber/Lyft/taxis (rideshares), as much as possible. In addition, avoid all non-essential travel including plane trips, and especially avoid embarking on cruise ships. All public forms of transportation pose some risk from aerosol and contact infections.
- If you have your own vehicle and can drive, use that as your main source of transportation. If you do not have your own vehicle, identify a friend or relative whom you can rely on to drive you or pick up and deliver supplies for you. Make sure the friend or relative you have selected is not sick or has not recently traveled to areas where there is sustained community transmission of COVID-19. If they do become sick, find someone else to transport you or deliver your supplies.

Social and Religious Functions

COVID-19 is likely to affect many of the places that facilitate worship, socializing, and other services, which may also be places that older populations patronize or even work in. Businesses and facilities will be also likely be advised to send home sick employees, use enhanced sanitation procedures, and stay open (especially those that provide essential services to older and general populations), but could close in the event of sustained community or statewide transmission. You may also voluntarily choose to stay away from certain places and gatherings to protect your health.

Possible Challenges

- Older individuals who use regularly scheduled social or religious events or services for socializing and staying in touch with others may feel lonely or isolated as the COVID-19 outbreak continues.
- You may have to rely on family members and friends to get to and from certain activities.
- When activities are cancelled, you may need to use technology (e.g., phone, Internet, television) wherever possible to engage in your activities or contact friends.

Proposed Arrangements

For church or religious services:

- As Utah has recommended cancelling group gatherings of more than 100 people, older individuals may want to seek out televised or online worship opportunities, even if services have not yet been cancelled for the place of worship that you normally attend. The following are ways to access services for a variety of faiths:
 - LDS COVID-19 Updates: <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/coronavirus-update-february-27-2020#precautions> (online)
 - LDS Services: <https://www.byutv.org/show/89883728-9bf8-4d39-b699-cb49bc2a51c6/worship-service> OR <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/broadcasts?lang=eng> (online)
 - Roman Catholic: <https://www.heartofthenation.org/where-to-watch> (televised)

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- Jewish: https://www.centralsynagogue.org/worship/live_streaming (online) OR Jewish Broadcasting Service, Verizon Fios: 798 (HD), DirecTV (US): Channel 388 (HD) (televised)
- Muslim (prayer times): <https://www.islamicfinder.org/> (online)
- Hindu: http://www.qchindutemple.com/online_puja.php (online)

For senior center-based or informal social activities:

While community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring, you may have to find alternatives to the activities that you would normally do at a senior center (which may be closed) or that you would do in large groups.

- Avoid social isolation: Try to set up a “buddy system” with one of your close friends for a daily check-in on the phone or an online system like Skype. You can also use these online systems to do activities together such as cooking, watching your favorite television shows, or playing games such as Scrabble or card games.
- Make use of senior center staff or resources that you know about: Your senior center’s administrative staff may be on call to help you access other resources while the center is closed (also see the Resources section below).
- Welfare checks: Consider contacting service providers such as postal delivery workers, community paramedics or neighborhood watch groups to check on the welfare of home-bound seniors.

Resources:

Salt Lake County Aging and Adult Services: 385-468-3200 OR <https://slco.org/aging-adult-services/>

Salt Lake City Senior Services and Resources:

<https://seniorsresourceguide.com/directories/SaltLakeCity/search.php?region=UT01&topic=604>

Davis County Senior Services: <https://www.daviscountyutah.gov/health/aging-and-adult-services>

Mountainland Senior Services (Wasatch, Utah and Summit Counties):

<https://www.mountainland.org/aging> OR 801-229-3804

Southeast Utah Aging Program and Area Agency on Aging:

<http://seualg.utah.gov/index.php/community-services/aging/>

Summit County Senior Services: 435-336-3014, 435-615-3014, or 435-783-4351, ext. 3014 OR

<https://www.summitcounty.org/375/Senior-Citizen-Services>

Tooele County Aging Services: <https://tooelehealth.org/aging-services/>

Uintah Basin Area Agency on Aging: 435-722-4518

Washington County Council on Aging: 435-634-5743 OR <http://coa.washco.utah.gov/about-us/>

Weber Aging Services: 801-625-3770 OR <https://www.weberhs.net/aging-services>

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In-Home Care or Services

For older individuals who are isolating voluntarily or due to symptoms, contacts, or travel, there may also be concerns surrounding the ongoing provision of in-home services or care. Individuals who are well should take precautions when receiving at-home care or services to prevent infection and slow the spread of COVID-19. Similarly, those who are experiencing symptoms should seek medical attention and should avoid contact with others.

Possible Challenges

Many older individuals need help accessing food/supplies if they are not able to shop for themselves. Meals on Wheels, food banks or store deliveries may be the ways in which these individuals receive enough nutrition. Similarly, those who use in-home support workers to cook, clean, or help them dress may want to take extra precautions. Assistance from family members or neighbors may be necessary to bridge gaps in care or services.

Proposed Arrangements

- If possible, try to replace your normal services with substitutes:
 - If there are household functions that you can take care of on your own, especially if they involve cleaning of high-contact surfaces, try to do these yourself.
 - Ask a family member or neighbor if they can pick up groceries or help with household functions (e.g., taking out trash) that do not involve close contact.
 - For those who need more sustained or routine in-home care, you may want to consider staying with family members for a period while the COVID-19 outbreak continues.

- When using at-home services:
 - If you are getting a grocery delivery and meal delivery, arrange for the groceries or the meal to be left outside of your front or back door.
 - If someone is performing maintenance like a roof repair or checking meter readings, try to communicate from behind your door and provide payment online (if possible) or in an outdoor space like a mailbox.
 - Call any other service providers that come to your house regularly to see if they have COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, and shortness of breath), have traveled to a high-risk environment where community transmission is happening, or have been in close contact with someone who has a confirmed case of COVID-19. They should not come to your house if they are ill or have been potentially exposed to COVID-19.

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Healthcare Needs

Meeting healthcare needs while staying away from public places is a challenge as many older individuals have regular physicians' appointments, prescription pickups, or health management activities such as exercise classes or physical therapy appointments. There is also higher risk that individuals over the age of 60 years old will need emergency medical care.

Possible Challenges

As the COVID-19 outbreak continues:

- Older individuals should avoid going to any healthcare facilities when possible.
- You will need to maintain access to essential medical requirements like prescription medicines.
- It will be important to find alternatives for activities that maintain your health and fitness.
- Non-urgent medical requirements such as checkups and physicals may need to be postponed.

Proposed Arrangements

Physician or medical care appointments:

- Call your healthcare provider to see if they provide telemedicine and check with your health insurance provider that telemedicine is a covered benefit.
- If telemedicine is not an option, try to reschedule your regular medical appointments, if possible, and discuss any other options with your healthcare provider.
- Consider bringing in a professional for a home assessment to identify needs or ways to make your home safer and more usable as the outbreak continues.
- Avoid elective procedures.
- If you become symptomatic (cough, fever, shortness of breath), contact your healthcare provider or call the Utah Department of Health hotline (1-800-456-7707) for advice on transportation and location of COVID-19 testing sites. Otherwise, avoid all healthcare facilities unless it is an emergency.

Refilling prescriptions:

- Avoiding public spaces and healthcare facilities includes pharmacies. Here are some options for getting your prescription(s) without putting yourself at risk:
 - Talk to your healthcare and health insurance providers about receiving an additional 2-week to 1-month supply of your prescription(s). Keep in mind that some health insurance providers may not cover advances on prescriptions.
 - Contact your healthcare and health insurance providers about mail order prescription options. Medicare does cover mail order prescriptions.
 - Have someone you trust, a friend or relative, pick up your prescription(s) and deliver them to you. Make sure the friend or relative you have selected is not sick or has not recently traveled to area that have community transmission of COVID-19. If they do become sick, find someone else to pick up your prescription(s).

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- Work with medical providers or local aging services agencies to ensure that medications can be delivered to your home. If you need oxygen, reach out to your supplier to arrange for refills or deliveries.
- For Medicare prescription delivery information: <https://www.aarpmedicareplans.com/health-plans/resources/mail-order-pharmacy.html>

Health management:

- If you have physical therapy appointments, ask your provider if you can have a videoconference-based appointment to do any exercises that can be performed in-home.
- Seek out alternative opportunities to stay well such as walking outside.
- Mental health visits conducted by social workers, therapists, psychiatrist or psychologists should be conducted by phone or over videoconference.
- Try to postpone or cancel massage therapy appointments.
- Contact your various providers to discuss your options for health management.

Emergency medical care:

- In the event of an emergency, please call 911 or go to your local emergency room. Health care systems in Utah have been advised to take enhanced precautions while providing care for older populations during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath: Call your health provider in advance of your arrival so that they can take proper precautions and prepare for testing if necessary.

Additional Resources

International:

The World Health Organization (WHO): <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

WHO Myth Busters on Coronavirus: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>

National:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Coronavirus website: www.cdc.gov/COVID19

CDC COVID-19 Hotline: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

CDC COVID-19 among high-risk groups:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

Senior Health Insurance Information Program: 1-800-541-7735

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National Council on Aging, COVID-19: <https://www.ncoa.org/blog/coronavirus-what-older-adults-need-to-know/>

Medicare: <https://www.medicare.gov/>

State:

Utah Department of Health Coronavirus website: <https://coronavirus.utah.gov/>

Utah Department of Health Coronavirus Hotline: 1-800-456-7707

Utah Aging and Adult Services: <https://daas.utah.gov> OR 1-801-538-4171

Local:

Bear River Health Department (Box Elder, Cache, and Rich Counties): 435-752-6962

Weber-Morgan Health Department (Weber and Morgan Counties): 801-625-3770

Summit County Health Department: 801-229-3800

Davis County Health Department: 801-525-5050

Salt Lake County Health Department: 801-468-3200

Tooele County Health Department: 435-277-2440

Utah County Health Department: 801-229-3800

Wasatch County Health Department: 801-229-3800

Tri-County Health Department (Daggett, Duchesne, and Uintah Counties): 435-789-2169

Central Utah Public Health Department (Juab, Millard, Sanpete, Sevier, Piute, and Wayne Counties): 435-893-0700

Southwest Utah Public Health Department (Beaver, Iron, Garfield, Washington, and Kane Counties): 435-673-3548

Southeast Utah Health Department (Carbon, Emery, and Grand Counties): 435-637-5444

San Juan County Health Department: 435-587-3225