



# *Fully Living Life*

**Amidst a Pandemic**

**A COVID-19 Guide for Safe Senior Living**

#### **Disclaimer**

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## A COVID-19 Guide for Safe Senior Living

Most of us have never experienced a global pandemic before. The new and unknown made it unthinkable and frightening, particularly for older adults who are at a higher risk for more serious illness and complications.

As a result, they've experienced more stringent restrictions that have interrupted their family relationships, weakened their social bonds and dampened their enthusiasm for life at a time when they should be living their best lives.

We want to put your loved one on a different path: a path that not only puts their health and safety first, but one that enables them to live fully and joyfully in spite of the pandemic.

This guide outlines commonsense measures, drawn from health and aging experts, with your loved one in mind. Our goal is to help alleviate their fears by showing the value of advance planning, reduce risk by showing what you can do to protect them, and safeguard their well-being by helping them stay aware, sharp, connected, and active.

You'll also find tips for you, as their caregiver, as well as considerations for what a healthy and safe senior living environment looks like and how it can help your loved one not just survive, but thrive in this changed world.

### What You Need to Know

- The risk for severe illness as a result of COVID-19 increases with age and with certain medical conditions.
- Those at increased risk—and those who live or visit with them—need to take precautions to protect themselves.
- Health and safety must come first, but living fully and joyfully should also be the goal.

# Plan Ahead to Make the Best Decisions

Planning ahead for any unforeseen event can help you reduce the fear that can keep you from making the best decisions for yourself. Take these steps to prepare:

- Learn how diseases spread to help protect yourself and others.
- Prepare for the possibility of closures and for your routine to be interrupted.
- Create an emergency plan, so that you know what to do in case an outbreak happens.
- Develop a care plan that outlines important healthcare information and speeds critical care.
- Gather emergency supplies in case you need to stay home for several days or weeks.
- Review your health insurance policies to understand what they cover, including telehealth options.
- Preserve important documents and store with a trusted person or create digital copies and store online for fast, password-protected access.
- Stay vigilant about scams and fraud. Only entrust your personal information to verified individuals and organizations.

## Develop a care plan

Be prepared by developing a care plan in consultation with your doctor, family member or caregiver. A care plan can help reduce emergency room visits and hospitalizations, and improve overall medical management. A care plan outlines your:

- Health conditions
- Medications
- Healthcare providers
- Emergency contacts
- End-of-life care options (for example, advance directives)

A care plan can also help you beyond the pandemic. Update it every year or any time there's a change in your health or medications, so you're always prepared.

### GET MORE INFO:

"How to Prepare Yourself for a Pandemic,"  
<https://www.ready.gov/pandemic>



# Gather emergency supplies

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has now recommended adding these items to your Emergency Supplies Kit to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 or other viruses:

- Masks, soap, hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes
- Prescription medications
- Non-prescription medications (e.g., pain relievers, anti-diarrhea medication, antacids or laxatives)
- Prescription eyeglasses and contact lens solution
- Pet food and extra water for pets
- Cash or traveler's checks
- Important family documents (e.g., copies of insurance policies, identification, and financial records saved electronically or in a waterproof, portable container)
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- Complete change of clothing appropriate for your climate and sturdy shoes
- Fire extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Personal hygiene items
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates, paper towels and plastic utensils
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities

GET MORE INFO:

[Ready.gov/kit](https://www.ready.gov/kit)

# Preserve important documents

In an emergency, you may need to quickly access important documents. Make a copy of critical documents to store them with a trusted person. You can also store password-protected digital copies online.

- Personal identification (e.g., driver's license/state-issued ID, passport, voter ID card, etc.)
- Personal Medication Record, and medical and immunization records
- Social Security card
- Medicare/Medicaid/health insurance card
- Financial records (e.g., recent tax returns, bank statements, retirement accounts, credit card numbers, investments, etc.)
- Home, auto and other insurance policies
- Property deed(s)
- Family records (e.g., wills, birth, marriage, divorce, adoption, child custody and death certificates)
- Legal titles (home, auto) and/or lease agreements
- Important contact numbers
- Records of passwords and personal identification numbers (PINs)
- Video and photo inventory documenting your valuables, and the interior and exterior of your home
- Cash and/or traveler's checks



# How to Reduce Your Risk of COVID-19



**Are you at risk for COVID-19?  
What should you look for?  
More importantly, what should you do?**

While there's no way to ensure you have zero risk of getting the virus that causes COVID-19, you should know what the symptoms are, so you can take steps to protect yourself and help reduce the spread. The CDC also recommends that older at-risk adults get vaccinated.

# Watch for symptoms of COVID-19

People with COVID-19 have experienced mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus and may include (but are not limited to):

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea



If you have severe symptoms or symptoms not listed here that concern you, please call your healthcare provider.

Seek emergency medical care immediately, if you have COVID-19 emergency warning signs that may include (but are not limited to):

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Pale, gray, or blue-colored skin, lips, or nail beds, depending on skin tone

Call 911 or call ahead to your local emergency facility and let the operator know that you are seeking care for a possible COVID-19 case.

GET MORE INFO:

CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

## Protect yourself

In addition to watching for symptoms of COVID-19, the CDC recommends that you protect yourself and others:

- Wear a mask when you interact with others.
- Limit in-person interactions with others, particularly when indoors.
- Keep space between yourself and others (stay 6 feet away, which is about 2 arm lengths).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow. Then, wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and frequently touched items.
- Get the COVID-19 vaccination.



# What You Need to Know



If you start feeling sick and think you may have COVID-19, get in touch with your healthcare provider within 24 hours.

# Get vaccinated

Getting vaccinated is one of the most important steps you can take to protect yourself—and others—from COVID-19. Vaccines are now available to older adults in every state, though the definition of “older” varies by state. Talk to your doctor about the safety, effectiveness, benefits and risks of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Three vaccines have been approved for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA):

- **Pfizer/BioNTech:** An initial shot, followed by a second dose 21 days after the first (94-95% effectiveness in preventing illness).
- **Moderna:** An initial shot, followed by a second dose 28 days after the first (94-95% effectiveness in preventing illness).
- **Johnson & Johnson:** A single shot (77% effective in preventing severe/critical COVID-19 case occurring at least 14 days after vaccination, 85% effective in preventing severe/critical COVID-19 side effects and showed significant protection against COVID-19-related hospitalization and death).

## Where to get the COVID-19 vaccine

Regardless of where you receive the vaccine, be prepared to bring identification, Medicare or insurance card, a doctor’s note for those with chronic conditions, or other information.

- Start with the state or local health department that is are responsible for the roll out in your area.
- Talk with your local pharmacists about when they will be giving shots.
- Check with your doctor or hospital, as they’ll not only be administering the vaccine, but they will likely know about vaccine sites in your area.
- Contact your Area Agency on Aging or senior center.

If you need assistance getting the vaccine, please ask family, friends or neighbors for help.

## What You Need to Know

- The vaccines currently approved by the FDA provide optimal protection against COVID-19.
- Take the vaccine that is first offered to you.
- The vaccine is free with a Medicare or insurance card
- Check with your state health department, pharmacy or doctor about when and where to receive the vaccine.
- Beware of fraud and scams asking you to sign up for, provide information for, or pay for the vaccine.

**GET MORE INFO:**

National Council on Aging, <https://www.ncoa.org/article/covid-vaccines-what-seniors-need-to-know>



# Support Your Well-Being



The pandemic, and the public health actions ordered to reduce the spread of COVID-19, can make us feel fearful, isolated and lonely. Prolonging these feelings can impact your emotional and physical health.

Support your well-being by taking conscious steps to stay aware, stay sharp, stay connected, and stay active.

## Stay Aware: Manage stress levels

- Prolonged stress, anxiety and grief can negatively impact your overall wellness, particularly for those at higher risk for COVID-19. Check if you've experienced:
  - Feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness or frustration.
  - Changes in appetite, energy, desires and interests.
  - Difficulty concentrating and making decisions.
  - Difficulty sleeping or nightmares.
  - Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems and skin rashes.
  - Worsening of chronic health problems.
  - Worsening of mental health conditions.
  - Increased use of tobacco, alcohol or other substances.
- Coping with stress in a healthy way increases your resilience. Here are some ways to help you cope:
  - Stay informed, but take breaks from watching, reading or listening to the news.
  - Take care of your body by eating healthy meals, drinking lots of water, exercising regularly, getting plenty of sleep, and avoiding excessive use of alcohol or other substances.
  - Make time to unwind with enjoyable activities, like reading, walking, playing games or learning new skills.
  - Discuss any concerns with trusted family and friends – or connect with community- and faith-based organizations.

### GET MORE INFO:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

## Stay Sharp: Maintain brain health

Exercising your brain is just as important as exercising your body, particularly as we age. With in-person events largely being cancelled, you now have limitless choices for virtual events and activities—without leaving your home.

- Use existing resources – Through programs like AARP® Staying Sharp,® members can access interactive activities, delicious recipes, games and more.
- Play a game – Many board games like Scrabble, Scattergories, Pictionary, Charades, Yahtzee and others can now be found online. Play them alone or with online friends.
- Attend a virtual event – Take classes, learn new skills, attend a lecture, watch a movie...all from the comfort of your home!
- Do a puzzle – Keep your brain engaged and active with jigsaw puzzles, crossword puzzles and word games.
- Take a tour – Many parks, museums, botanical gardens, zoos, aquariums and more offer virtual tours—it's the next best thing to being there.
- Stream a performance – Live shows, such as concerts, movies and other events are being streamed from opera houses, stadiums, and other venues.
- Play esports – Test your reflexes by playing video games at home or joining a competitive esports league for older adults.

## Stay Connected: Socialize with others

Prevent feelings of isolation by safely and consistently connecting with family and friends by phone, email, social media and other socially distanced channels.

- Schedule virtual visits – Use popular apps—like Facebook, Facetime, Duo, Zoom, and others—to stay in touch with kids, grandkids and friends.
- Join a club – Bond over shared interests—books, movies, TV shows or hobbies—by joining or starting a virtual club.
- Go to church – Attend live services or seek assistance from your local church or any faith-based organization throughout the country.
- Mentor kids – Share your wisdom and advice about life, love, and work with younger people.
- Get support – Talk with those you trust about any concerns and how you are feeling.

## Stay Active: Get Physically Fit

Physical activity that meets your fitness level and is focused on increasing your endurance, strength, balance and flexibility is important for healthy aging. You can find low- or no-cost classes and activities at local parks, senior centers, fitness centers and gyms, at shopping malls—even online! Just remember to follow COVID-19 recommendations in your area for masking, social distancing and other guidance.

**Endurance** – Increase your breathing and heart rates with aerobic activities.

- Take a hike, a walk or a run.
- Climb stairs, hills or mountains.
- Dance the night away.
- Bike to a coffee shop to meet friend.
- Go swimming or take a water aerobics class.
- Do yard work, such as raking, digging and planting.

**Strength** – Stay independent and make everyday activities easier with muscular strength.

- Do arm curls using water bottles or soup cans.
- Carry groceries out of the store and into your home.
- Use a resistance band.
- Grip a tennis ball 10 times for 3-5 seconds each.

**Balance** – Prevent trips, slips and falls with balance-improving exercises.

- Practice tai chi.
- Walk heel to toe for 20 steps.
- Take a yoga class.
- Slowly stand from a seated position.

**Flexibility** – Move more freely with stretching exercises for your back, legs and arms.

### GET MORE INFO:

Visit the National Institute on Aging's Exercise and Physical Activity page at <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity>



## Tips for Supporting Your Loved One

Balancing COVID-19 protections with your desire to see your loved one is challenging. The good news? You can still support your loved one, even while limiting contact.

- Reassure them that you're always there to help them navigate through COVID-19 and allay their fears.
- Put together a team of people and community services—such as Meals on Wheels—that can help you perform some caregiving tasks.
- Ensure they have a 2-week supply of food, water, cleaning supplies and medical supplies/equipment.
- Shop for food, clothing, prescriptions and other necessities – and either drop them off or arrange for delivery.
- Make sure you have a list of all medications, a 30-day supply of critical medications and contact information for healthcare providers.
- Encourage them to take advantage of telehealth and telemedicine as ways to ensure their well-being, keep their regular doctor appointments, and receive supportive care for their emotional health.
- Regularly check in by phone or video chat, and provide updates on the grandkids and family.
- Set aside time for reading to the grandkids or helping them with homework.
- Make time for fun by setting up family games, dinners and watch parties. Laughter is, after all, the best medicine!
- Send care packages with treats, puzzles, books or anything else that would bring a smile to their face.
- Put a backup plan in place, in case you're unable to tend to your loved one's care.

# Consider the Benefits of Senior Living

Is your loved one safe at a senior living community? Yes! Senior living communities, like Astral at Auburn, follow strict COVID-19 health and safety guidelines, including:

- Cleaning and disinfecting common areas multiple times a day.
- Checking staff members' temperatures before they enter the community.
- Screening visitors and ensuring they follow recommended safety protocols.
- Washing and sanitizing hands before helping any resident.
- Closely monitoring residents to detect early signs or symptoms of COVID-19.
- Limiting communal services, like dining and activities, to maintain social distancing.
- Restricting symptomatic residents to their apartments until they are tested.
- Keeping residents up to date on any confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- Maintaining proper PPE recommendations and protocols as directed by state and local authorities and the CDC.

In addition, you're probably balancing multiple priorities, such as family responsibilities, childcare, work demands and more. Senior living communities are solely focused on your loved one's safety and well-being and can help them:

- Carry out daily tasks, such as medication management, dressing and bathing.
- Manage Alzheimer's or dementia symptoms, a particular challenge for those who need memory support.
- Connect with others and make the most of every day through safe, socially distanced activities.
- Promote their well-being with healthy meals, safe ways to exercise, social activities and more.
- Regularly schedule on- and off-campus activities and events, as appropriate.
- Get the resources needed to put care plans, estate plans, advance directives, etc. in place.
- If you're considering a senior living community, consider taking a virtual tour to get inside and see what life would be like for your loved one.





## A SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITY Worth Exploring

ASTRAL AT AUBURN is about embracing your wellbeing by providing the fullest in lifestyles, focusing on health, heart and soul. It's a community that's centered around the way you want to live, with a new and refreshing approach to the senior lifestyle, helping residents remain as self-sufficient as possible, even if health challenges arise.

Take in the ambiance of fine dining with locally inspired cuisine. Relax and enjoy your favorite book in our comfortable and inviting living areas or meet new friends and neighbors over a game of cards. Come and join us!

**YOUR NEW HOME IS WAITING FOR YOU.**

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