

COVID-19 and Multigenerational Homes and Multifamily Buildings

General Information to protect multigenerational homes and multifamily buildings from COVID-19

Multigenerational homes are defined by Statistics Canada as at least three generations of the same family living together like children, adults and elders in the same home. In these homes, family members can transmit sickness to older adults or others who have other health concerns, such as diabetes or heart conditions. Steps can be taken to protect at risk family members from the COVID-19 virus.

What is COVID-19:

- COVID-19 is from a large family of viruses called Coronaviruses.
- Some coronaviruses cause respiratory sickness in people, ranging from common colds to severe pneumonias. Others cause sickness in animals only.
- COVID-19 is a new strain of the virus that had not been previously seen in humans.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19:

- Symptoms for COVID-19 are similar to those for influenza (commonly known as the flu) or other respiratory sicknesses. COVID-19 and Influenza are not the same as the stomach flu, which is a sickness that causes diarrhea and vomiting.
- The most common symptoms can be mild and include:
 - cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat
- Most people (about 80%) recover from COVID-19 without needing special treatment.
- However, it can cause a serious sickness. Those who are older, and those with other medical issues are at risk to develop serious sickness, which can include:
 - difficulty breathing
 - pneumonia
- There is a risk of death in severe cases.
- Older persons and persons with other health concerns or medical issues (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes) appear to develop serious sickness more often than others.

How is COVID-19 spread and how are cases kept track of:

- COVID-19 is spread mainly from person to person by coughing, sneezing or direct contact with a sick person or with surfaces they have recently touched. It is not an airborne sickness.
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- If someone tests positive for COVID-19, a nurse will follow-up with the person. The nurse will try to determine where the person got the sickness from and who else may be at risk of getting sick.
- When someone tests positive for COVID-19, they are called a case.

How can you protect your family from COVID-19:

- Be prepared if a family member becomes sick.
- Family members with health concerns should try to use their own bed and bedroom if possible.
- Family members with health concerns should try to use their own bathroom. If this is not possible, the bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected regularly. A schedule could be set up for bathing/showering, allowing family members with health concerns to use the bathroom first.
- Ensure your household is well ventilated. Use bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans to remove excess moisture and open windows to air out the home when possible.
- Family members with health concerns should use the kitchen at different times of the day from the rest of the family and eat in their own space.

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- Clean and disinfect common touch surfaces like handrails, light switches and doorknobs regularly.
- Remove common touch food related items such as fruit/snack bowls from the table or counter.
- Try to minimize contact with family members with health concerns by reducing time together in shared common areas of the home and practicing social distancing. This means maintaining a distance of at least six feet (two metres) from others when possible. Here is a link to a video on social distancing: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17008.aspx>
- Clean common touch surfaces of your car before transporting an at risk family member.
- Limit the amount of visitors into your home to only those that are absolutely necessary.
- Depending on your work, it may be prudent to change your clothes when you come home from work.
- Do not attend large gatherings of more than 15 people, or whatever lower number is recommended by your community.

What happens if the case lives in a multi-family building such as an apartment complex:

- If a case lives in a multi-family building, it is not necessary to evacuate the building. The affected person must self-isolate in their home [e.g. apartment unit].
- We encourage building operators and landlords to work together to ensure common areas of buildings are cleaned, and high touch areas such as railings and elevator buttons are disinfected more than regular.

What happens if a case lives in a multi-generational home?

- In some communities, the case may be moved to self-isolate properly. This is to keep the other family members healthy.
- Cases should stay in their home or self-isolation location. Do not go to the doctor unless you are very sick, such as having trouble breathing, dizziness or not able to stand up on your own.
- Cases should follow all the prevention suggestions listed above.
- Follow any other directions the nurse gives you.

What should I do if I think a family member has COVID-19:

- Follow the direction from your community
- If you are sick or think you may have been exposed to COVID-19:
 - Stay home and call Health Link 811 for advice.
 - Complete the COVID-19 self-assessment tool: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Journey/COVID-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx>
 - Call 911 if you are seriously ill and need immediate medical attention and inform them that you may have COVID-19.

Where can I get more COVID-19 Information:

- General information on COVID-19:
 - Government of Alberta: <https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>
 - Government of Alberta COVID-19 General Information Line: 310-4455
 - Government of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>