



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
COMMISSION ON AGING AND DISABILITY

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Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability Provides Older Adults Guidance on COVID-19

As cases of the novel coronavirus now known as COVID-19 continue to rise in Tennessee, research has shown that older adults and individuals with underlying medical conditions may be particularly susceptible to the disease. In an effort to help provide older adults with helpful information regarding the virus, the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability has compiled the following frequently asked questions in order to provide older adults and their families with guidance during this time.

1. What actions can older Tennesseans take to reduce their risk of getting sick?

If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of your age or because you have a serious long-term health problem, it is extra important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of getting sick with the disease.

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.**
- **Avoid crowds and stay home** as much as possible to further reduce your risk of being exposed.
- **Consider ways of getting food and other supplies brought to your house** through family, friends, commercial businesses, or the aging network
- **Manage your stress** – Managing stress will make you, your loved ones, and your community stronger. To better cope with stress, make sure you are connecting with your friends and family and making time to unwind

2. What can family, caregivers, and Tennesseans do to support older adults in our communities?

- **Practice social distancing.** The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. By reducing your risk of illness, you are protecting those closest to you.
- **Call them.** While older Tennesseans and other at-risk populations are encouraged to avoid in-person contact, now is the perfect time to use technology to connect and strengthen relationships with individuals you care about.
- **Make sure your older loved ones are stocked up on non-perishable food** in their homes to minimize trips to stores.



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- **Monitor food, medication and other medical supplies** (oxygen, incontinence, dialysis, wound care) needed and create a back-up plan for if these supplies begin to run low.
- **Offer to run errands for an older friend, family member, or neighbor so they can stay home.**
- **Consider volunteering or donating to a local home-delivered meal program**
- If you have a loved one living in a care facility, consult with the staff on their protocol before visiting

3. *What can you do to prepare in case you get sick?*

- **Consult with your health care provider** to develop a plan that is right for you
- **Stay in touch with others by phone or email.** You may need to ask for help from friends, family, neighbors, community health workers, etc. if you become sick.
- If you have a caregiver, **determine who can care for you** if that individual gets sick
- **Make sure you have supplies on hand** (over-the counter and prescription medications, groceries, etc.)

3. *What should you do if you believe you may have COVID-19?*

- If you believe you have been exposed to COVID-19 or you have symptoms such as, fever, cough, and shortness of breath, **stay home and call your doctor or healthcare provider**
- **If you are having a medical emergency** – call 911

4. *What do you do if you need additional information, resources, or services for yourself or an older loved one in Tennessee?*

- Call the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability at **1-866-836-6678** or email us at **TN.Aging@tn.gov**