

Home Care Infection Control Guidance Concerning COVID-19

WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness, including fever, cough and shortness of breath. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus. It is not the same as other types of coronaviruses that commonly circulate among people and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

PROTECT HOME CARE CLIENTS AND PROVIDERS FROM EXPOSURES AND TRANSMISSION

Home health and personal care agency personnel who provide direct care to an individual in the home setting can take a few simple steps to help protect both the client and direct care worker:

1. When making a home visit, identify clients at risk for having COVID-19 before or immediately upon arrival to the home. The client and any other person who will be in the home during the appointment (e.g., visitor, family member) should be carefully screened for the following:
 - a) Fever or respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath or sore throat)
 - b) Close contact with a suspect or confirmed person with COVID-19
 - c) Travel from a COVID-19 affected community or geographic area within 14 days
 - d) Residing in a community where community-based spread of COVID-19 is occurring

If any one of these criteria is present, a home visit should only be conducted by essential personnel and assistance should be provided to the client in notifying their health care provider as needed. The following are suggestions for determining essential personnel:

- Direct care workers that provide services in which the interruption would endanger the client's life, health or personal safety.
 - Essential personnel may include nurses, home health aides, attendant care aides, homemaker aides, hospice care personnel and providers funded by Indiana FSSA.
 - Minimize the number of essential personnel in contact with the client to reduce potential transmission.
2. Maintain at least a 6 feet distance from the client and other individuals in the home whenever possible.
 3. Wear a disposable facemask and gloves when providing direct care including touching or having contact with stool or body fluids.
 - a) Masks should be conserved and only a single mask should be worn each day.
 - b) Throw these away after use and do not reuse.
 - c) When removing, first remove and dispose of gloves, then immediately clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - d) Next, remove and dispose of the facemask, and immediately clean your hands again with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

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- e) Should you encounter a PPE mask shortage, store your mask in a paper bag and do not touch the front of the mask, only the strings or ear loops. Clean your hands after securing the paper bag.
4. Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60% to 95% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. You should use soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.
5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
6. Cover your coughs and sneezes. Use respiratory cough etiquette using your sleeve or tissue to cough. If a tissue is used, dispose of the tissue right away and perform hand hygiene immediately.
7. Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects often using household disinfectants that contain bleach products or alcohol greater than 70%.
8. Monitor your client's symptoms.
 - a) If the client has flu-like symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath, both the client and the caregiver should wear face masks.
 - b) If you suspect a possible COVID-19 case, assist the client in contacting their health care provider, and if unavailable, call the ISDH Epidemiology Resource Center at 877-826-0011 (available 24/7).
9. For home care instructions for clients who have or are being evaluated for COVID-19, visit:
https://www.in.gov/coronavirus/files/IN_COVID-19_Home_Care_3.18.20.pdf
10. Train a client's informal caregiver and/or family member as back-up care if services are disrupted for any reason; work with the client's care manager to develop a back-up plan, especially for those clients without available informal or family support.
11. Get plenty of rest, drink fluids, eat healthy foods and manage your stress.
12. Stay home when you're sick. Alert your client and your client's case manager, if appropriate, to tell them you will be staying home and who will be providing care in your place.
13. Personnel who develop symptoms confirmed or suspected to be COVID-19 should call their provider for testing authorization
 - a) The provider can have testing request entered into the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) request form: <https://redcap.isdh.in.gov/surveys/?s=WMKD7PHEPF>. **Please note that this form is intended to be used only by healthcare providers, infection preventionists or other health care personnel.**
 - b) For questions please call ISDH line at 877-826-0011 (available 24/7) to have testing approved.
 - c) Providers also have the option to work with Lilly, LabCorp or Quest for commercial testing should they deem appropriate.
14. Personnel should also note that their local health department will be making contact with them if their test comes back positive and will instruct them on home monitoring of all close contacts.
15. Providers should follow home quarantine recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>) and return to work when the following conditions have been met:
 - a) Fever free for at least 72 hours (three full days of no fever without the use medicine that reduces fevers).
 - AND**
 - b) Other symptoms have improved (for example, your cough or shortness of breath have improved).
 - AND**
 - c) At least 10 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Questions about COVID-19 may be directed to the ISDH COVID-19 Call Center at the toll-free number 877-826-0011 (available 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.).

Additional information and resources for COVID-19 are available at the links below.

- CDC COVID-19 webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>
- ISDH COVID-19 webpage: <https://coronavirus.in.gov>
- Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention Concerning COVID-19 in Home Health Agencies (CMS): <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-18-hha.pdf>
- Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in Homes and Residential Communities - Recommended Precautions for Household Members, Intimate Partners, and Caregivers (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html>
- Interim Guidance for Implementing Home Care of People Not Requiring Hospitalization for COVID-19 (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-home-care.html>