

## Guidance for Older New Yorkers: What you need to know about COVID-19

**There is widespread community transmission of COVID-19. This means it is spreading freely in the community and that we all need to act as though we are exposed.** The symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat. People 50 years old or over and people who have other health conditions, including chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, or a weakened immune system are most at risk for severe COVID-19 illness.

Together we can slow the spread and protect those at higher risk of severe illness and our health care workers from getting sick. See below for what to do, and what not to do, to help older New Yorkers stay safe.

For the latest information and guidance on COVID-19, visit the NYC Health Department website: [nyc.gov/coronavirus](https://nyc.gov/coronavirus).

### *The DOs and DON'Ts of protecting against COVID-19*

#### ✓ DO: Take steps to protect yourself from COVID-19

- Stay home. All New Yorkers — healthy or sick — need to stay home. **This is especially important for people 50 years old or older and people with any of the chronic health conditions listed above.** You should only leave your home for essential tasks, such as work (if you cannot work from home), getting groceries and supplies, or essential medical care.
- Closely monitor your health for fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat or other cold or flu-like symptoms.
- Wash your hands with soap and water often, for at least 20 seconds. If you are unable to wash your hands, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Do not touch your face unless you recently washed your hands.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or sleeve when sneezing or coughing. Do not use your hands.
- Do not shake hands. Instead, wave.
- Keep at least 6 feet between yourself and others.
- Avoid all nonessential travel and interactions.
- If you need to leave home, avoid public transportation – walk or take a private vehicle when possible.

#### ✓ DO: Consult with a doctor if you are experiencing symptoms and you are 50 years of age or older or have any of the chronic health conditions listed above.

- Use telephone, text, telemedicine, or a patient portal to reach out rather than going to your health care provider in person.
- You and your provider will decide if you need to come to medical care. You do not need to be tested for COVID-19 unless you are admitted to the hospital with a severe illness like pneumonia.
- If you need help finding a health care provider, **call 311** to find a NYC Health and Hospitals provider. NYC Health and Hospitals provides care to all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, insurance status or ability to pay. New Yorkers who are at high-risk because of age, pre-existing conditions and symptoms, can also call 1-844-NYC-4NYC for more information.

✓**DO: Keep your body and mind healthy.**

- Go outside for exercise. Always follow good hygiene when doing so and stay at least 6 feet from other people. Walking, running, and bicycling can all be done while still practicing social distancing.
- Try to stay connected with friends and family through telephone, social media, and video chat. It's helpful to see your loved ones and interact with them remotely.

**X DO NOT: Go to a hospital unless you are told to by your doctor or you are having a medical emergency.**

- Going to a hospital can expose you and others to infection. It also increases risks to health care workers of exposure and will take away care from someone who is critically ill.

**X DO NOT: Wear a face mask**

- In general, healthy people don't need to wear facemasks. If you are sick and even if you are not sick, **staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.** If you need to go outside, avoid crowds, keep a minimum of six feet between you and others, and practice good hygiene such as washing your hands, using hand sanitizer, and not touching your face. [See NYC Health Department Fact Sheet for more information.](#)

### **Center Delivered Meals**

In response to social distancing and recommendations for older adults to remain in their homes, all DFTA-funded senior centers are currently closed for congregate programming. Congregate meals are now being delivered to the homes of senior center members through a centralized delivery system. Centers can continue to deplete their remaining supply of food to prevent wastefulness or spoilage but must deliver the meal, grab-and-go is not permitted.

Starting the week of March 30, all senior centers fully transitioned from providing grab-and-go to relying on the centralized delivery system.

- **When did senior centers stop providing grab-and-go congregate meals?**

Starting the week of March 23, all DFTA-funded senior centers gradually transitioned from providing congregate meals via 'grab-and-go' to a centralized direct delivery meal system for older adults. To ensure that there was no disruption to older adults' access to food, senior centers continued grab-and-go meal service until the new centralized direct delivery system was fully rolled-out on March 30. Starting March 30, grab-and-go is no longer permissible by DFTA, as it is no longer consistent with DOHMH recommendations for older adults to stay home.

- **How are senior centers receiving meals for delivery?**

DFTA's goal is to ensure that older adults receive the daily meal, which they would receive but for the citywide congregate sites closure. Through the centralized direct delivery system, some senior centers are required to serve as hubs to receive meals before they are delivered. Depending on the contractor's catchment areas, meals may be delivered directly to the homes of the older adult. Ongoing coordination between DFTA, contractors, and senior centers will continue to ensure a streamlined and efficient process is maintained. In addition, robocall notifications are currently being deployed to ensure that older adults are alerted to the delivery of their meal package.

- **How many meals will each older adult receive?**

Through the new centralized direct delivery system, 5-meal packages are delivered to each older adult every week.

- **Will kosher meals be available?**

Yes, one DFTA-contracted provider will be providing kosher meals for older adults throughout the five boroughs.

- **How will non-DFTA senior center members sign up to receive meals?**

There are a variety of ways an older adult in need can sign up to receive a daily meal. The basis for the individual's need will help determine the most appropriate method. Homebound older adults can receive home-delivered meals through a DFTA-funded case management agency. If an older adult is not homebound, the senior center direct delivery system may be the most appropriate resource for meals. In this case, older adults should call their local senior center to sign up to receive directly delivered meals. They can also email [agingconnect@aging.nyc.gov](mailto:agingconnect@aging.nyc.gov) or call Aging Connect at 212-Aging-NYC (212-244-6469) or 311.

The City has also created the GetFoodNYC food delivery program to provide food for coronavirus vulnerable and food-insecure New Yorkers not currently served through existing food delivery programs. [Learn more and sign up for the GetFoodNYC program.](#)

### **Additional questions**

#### **Is it still safe to use Access-A-Ride to get to medical appointments or pick up medicine?**

- Access-A-Ride is now abiding by the prohibition on shared rides. When traveling, try to avoid contact with others as much as possible, avoid touching your face, and use hand sanitizer and wash your hands thoroughly when possible. Where possible, have your doctor provide prescriptions for a several month supply and have medicines delivered to you at home.

#### **Who should I call if I feel isolated?**

- Remain in touch with friends and family through telephone and video-chat.
- If you are normally a user of a Senior Center, you should reach out to them to see what services they are providing.
- If you feel isolated or have symptoms of stress that are overwhelming, you can connect with trained counselors at NYC Well, a free and confidential mental health support service that can help New Yorkers cope. NYC Well staff are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and can provide brief counseling and referrals to care in over 200 languages. For support, call [888-NYC-WELL \(888-692-9355\)](tel:888-NYC-WELL), text "WELL" to 65173 or visit [nyc.gov/nycwell](http://nyc.gov/nycwell) to [chat online](#).