How to prevent infection with novel coronavirus when you live several people close together

4 December 2020
1. For people living close together during COVID-19

We know that living close together during COVID-19 is not easy — and that it does not necessarily make it any easier if, for example, you are young and live in a student residence or share a house or a flat/apartment. The Danish Health Authority would like to provide you with guidance for how you can prevent the spread of infection with novel coronavirus if you live together in close quarters.

Therefore, this guidance gives you specific examples of how to make it easier for you and those you live with to comply with the Danish Health Authority’s main recommendations for how to prevent infection. You can also read about your options if one of you becomes infected.

Do not let coronavirus enter your home
The guidance is primarily intended for those of you who are members of the residents’ council in a student residence or in a large houseshare/flatshare. But residents’ associations from other housing associations can also benefit from the guidance. We hope that you will help those you live with take good care of each other by looking into whether you can do even more than you are already doing. Some residences share more communal areas than others. Use the guidance that is most relevant to your living situation.

By preventing infection from person to person, we can reduce the spread of infection in society and thus protect those who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Perhaps some of you may also be at higher risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19. If this is the case, it is even more important that you prevent the spread of infection where you live.

Please turn to the last page to find links to more information about COVID-19 as well as posters etc.
Important information about novel coronavirus/COVID-19

COVID-19 is the name of the disease caused by infection with novel coronavirus.

Infection
To prevent the spread of infection, it is important to know how novel coronavirus is transmitted.

Contact spread: If someone who is infected with novel coronavirus has virus-infected saliva or snot on their hands, they can pass on the infection directly to others, for example by shaking hands with them. An infected person can also deposit the virus on surfaces such as door handles when coughing/sneezing or when touching the surfaces with contaminated hands. The next person who comes along and touches the same surface can then become infected when touching his or her own nose, eyes or mouth.

Droplet spread: An infected person can spread droplets containing the virus through coughing or sneezing. These droplets can be inhaled by another person or land in their eyes, nose or mouth.

Symptoms
Typical symptoms of COVID-19:

- Dry cough
- Fever
- Difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Loss of sense of taste and smell
- Muscle pain

General guidance on how to prevent infection

1. Self-isolate if you have symptoms of COVID-19, have tested positive or are a close contact of someone who is infected with novel coronavirus.
2. Wash your hands often or use hand sanitiser.
3. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
4. Do not shake hands, hug or kiss as a greeting.
5. Make sure to clean thoroughly — both at home and at work.
6. Keep your distance and ask others to be considerate.

If you are unable to comply with one of the recommendations, make sure that you comply with the others.
2. Housing conditions and prevention of infection with novel coronavirus

Apart from the guidance in the blue box, there are rules of thumb/useful tips on how to prevent the spread of infection if you live together in close quarters.

2.1 Social distancing and layout of the residence
Recommendation for how to keep a safe distance:

- Keep a physical distance from those you live with. This means that you must all be able to keep a distance of 1 metre from each other at all times. The distance is measured ‘from nose tip to nose tip’.

- Avoid that too many residents gather in a small, shared kitchen in a student residence. Each should have 4 m$^2$ at his or her disposal when you are together in any types of shared room. This means that a maximum of three people can be together in a space of 12 m$^2$.

- Make it easy for everyone to keep a distance of 1 metre, for example by using distance markings on the floor. This is especially important in your shared areas where you can easily end up standing close together or queuing when eating together, in elevators or shared laundry rooms. See specific examples of distance markings on the last page.

2.2 Cleaning and clean hands
Cleaning can make a big difference in preventing the spread of infection. This applies, in particular, to the cleaning of contact points. Contact points are surfaces that are touched by many people. This includes door handles, handrails, light switches, push buttons, armrests, table edges, appliances and utensils, taps, toilets and so on. When many people touch the same things, this increases the risk of virus being spread from hand to hand — and then to nose, mouth or eyes.

Ordinary cleaning with soap and water is usually enough to prevent infection. If you want to be extra careful, you can disinfect with cleaning alcohol. This is also a good solution in situations where it is not possible to use soap and water. Extra cleaning is a good idea during the autumn and winter seasons. It is also a good idea to pay extra attention to cleaning if the infection rate is high in your area.

It is imperative that you ensure good hand hygiene. Therefore, hand sanitiser dispensers can be placed at the entrance and on the tables in your communal rooms. Here are some tips you can follow in all shared areas:

- Identify and mark contact points such as door handles and push buttons. For example, put small signs on doors and light switches to remind you all to use your elbow instead of your fingers. See specific examples on the last page.
• Make a plan for how contact points can be cleaned frequently and thoroughly — preferably at least once a day.

• Make sure everyone has easy access to hand sanitiser and to washing their hands. Liquid soap is more hygienic than a bar of soap.

• Avoid sharing towels. Paper towels are the best alternative.

• Make hand sanitiser dispensers available in shared areas and at the entrances to the building. Place the hand sanitiser dispenser where it is clearly visible, and please provide extra hand sanitiser dispensers in locations where you know that contact points are touched by many people.

• Make a plan or roster for refilling hand sanitiser and liquid soap dispensers.

• Air out shared rooms twice a day for 10 minutes if you do not have air conditioning. If the shared room is used a lot, it is a good idea to air it out once every hour.

2.3 Specific proposals for prevention of infection in the rooms you share

2.3.1 Entrances, stairs and bicycle basement

• Make sure to place a hand sanitiser dispenser so that everyone can disinfect their hands first thing when entering the building. If you have a lobby, it is a good idea to place hand sanitiser dispensers in several places. It is also a good idea to place hand sanitiser dispensers by the elevator or staircase leading to the rest of the building.

• You can put up signs next to the hand sanitiser dispensers to make them easier to see and to remind people to disinfect their hands.

• Make sure that contact points at staircases or elevators are cleaned frequently. This includes doorbells, elevator buttons, handrails, light switches and door handles.

• If you have an elevator, put up a sign showing how many people are allowed to use the elevator at a time. It is a good idea to place markings on the floor inside the elevator to show where people can stand while keeping a distance of 1 metre.

• If you have a bicycle basement or other alternative entrance, make sure that hand sanitiser dispensers are also put up there, so that you can disinfect your hands before entering the building. Make sure that contact points are cleaned every day.

• It is a good idea to have disinfecting wipes or disposable cloths with soap placed at the entrance/bicycle basement so that you can quickly and easily clean up after you.

2.3.2 Shared kitchens

• Put a sign on the door showing the maximum number of people who are allowed in the kitchen at the same time. There should be 4 m² available per person in the kitchen.

• Make sure that — as far as possible — there is a distance of 1 metre between
workstations in the kitchen. This may be a challenge at times when many people are cooking.

- Make a plan for when each of you can use the kitchen to avoid being too many people together at the same time. Make sure to have fixed groups of max ten people who cook and eat together.

- Place hand sanitiser dispensers on tables and near entrances to the kitchen.

- Sit with a distance of 1 metre between you at the table. You can mark seating places on the tabletop and remove extra chairs. See specific examples on the last page.

- Clean the kitchen after you have used it, pay special attention to the contact points. Make sure the kitchen is cleaned very thoroughly twice a week. Replace dish towels and cloths daily.

- Remove any shared cushions and blankets. Alternatively, wash them once a week at 60 degrees.

- Serve food in individual portions when you eat together, and make sure that only one person ladles out the food to avoid that everyone touches the same spoons etc. Also serve snacks in individual portions. Wash or disinfect your hands before and after meals and clean the table after you have finished eating.

- Remember to air out the rooms at least twice a day for 10 minutes.

- Make sure you have enough cutlery, glasses and other tableware for everyone.

### 2.3.3 Shared toilets and baths

- Avoid sharing towels after washing your hands — use paper towels instead. Use liquid soap instead of bars of soap. Always wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet. You can put up guides with images for how to wash your hands correctly.

- Do not leave your personal hygiene products in shared toilets and bathrooms, for example toothbrushes, razors etc. Take them back to your room after use instead.

- Clean shared toilets daily or more often if needed. Bathrooms must also be cleaned frequently and aired out if possible. Wash or disinfect your hands after cleaning.

### 2.3.4 Shared laundry facilities

- Put a sign on the door showing how many people are allowed in the laundry and drying room at the same time, so that there are 4 m² available per person. Make a washing schedule or roster for the residents to prevent that too many people use the washing and drying facilities at the same time.

- Make sure that contact points such as door handles and push buttons on the washing machine and dryer are cleaned often. If clotheslines are used, avoid sharing clothes pegs. Wash or disinfect your hands after you have hung up the clothes.

- The clothes of persons infected with COVID-19 must be washed separately and at minimum 60 degrees. Run an empty hot wash (90 degrees) afterwards.
2.3.5 Shared living room, reading room etc.
- Put a sign on the door showing how many people are allowed in the room at the same time.
- Make sure there is a distance of 1 metre between seats.
- Clean your seating area after you have used it. Make sure there are hand sanitiser dispensers and wipes or disposable cloths with soap and water available in the room for cleaning.
- Make sure that the room is aired out if there is no air conditioning.
- You may put up a sign, reminding residents to disinfect their phones and PCs.
- If there is a printer, you should preferably provide a hand sanitiser dispenser next to the printer and clean the buttons frequently.

2.3.6 Fitness and training room
- Place fitness machines at a distance of 2 metres from each other. If floor exercises are done, you can mark places on the floor at a distance of 2 metres.
- Place hand sanitiser dispensers at the entrance and preferably display a sign reminding people to disinfect their hands before and after training.
- Machines must be wiped off with cleaning alcohol every time they have been used. Make sure that alcohol and wipes are available in the room. Use alcohol in a bottle or disinfecting wipes instead of using a spray bottle for wiping off machines and equipment. If you use a spray, there is a risk that you will get droplets on your face during cleaning. Remind people to disinfect their hands before touching the bottle with alcohol.

2.3.7 Music room, game room, cinema and other hobby rooms
- Put a sign on the door showing how many people are allowed in the room at the same time.
- Make sure there are hand sanitiser dispensers at the entrance and on tables.
- Air out the room before and after use if there is no air conditioning. Air out the room once an hour if it is used for an extended period of time.
- Make sure that contact points are cleaned often.

2.3.8 Party rooms and social events
- Do not organise any parties or social events.
- While the high infection rate is high in society, it is a bad idea to organise parties and social events attended by many people. The risk of infection increases when many people who normally do not interact with each other meet. This may, for example, be residents who are users of many different kitchens or friends and fellow students who do not live in the student residence/houseshare/flatshare.
All residents must feel secure about using the communal areas of a student residence, houseshare, flatshare etc. Therefore, set down rules for inviting friends from outside into the shared kitchens and other areas that everyone uses. Instead, you can invite guests to your own room. However, it is a bad idea to invite so many friends to your room that you cannot keep a distance of 1 metre between you.

If you have special party rooms or other rooms in the building that can be used for private events without too many guests, make sure that the rooms are cleaned thoroughly after each use. Focus on contact points and air out thoroughly if there is no air conditioning.

2.3.9 Residents’ meetings, residents’ council meetings and the like
- If possible, hold virtual meetings or go outdoors.
- Make sure all participants wash or disinfect their hands before entering the meeting room.
- Keep a distance of 1 metre during the meeting.
- Clean contact points and tabletops after the meeting.
- Air the room before and after the meeting. For long meetings, air out the room once an hour.

2.3.10 Information in other languages
- At the Danish Health Authority’s website, you can find much of the Danish Health Authority’s material on COVID-19 in several different languages. If you have residents who do not speak Danish, it is a good idea also to distribute information about COVID-19 in other languages or display information posters in other languages.

3. If someone is infected or a close contact

If one or more residents become infected with novel coronavirus, it is essential that they self-isolate in their own rooms. During self-isolation, you may only go out when you need to be tested and to use the toilet and bathroom if your room does not have such facilities. Remember to wear a CE-marked face mask when you go to and from the test centre. You must also self-isolate in your room if you have symptoms that may be COVID-19 or if you are a close contact of an infected person. The other residents must ensure that shared areas are thoroughly cleaned as soon as the resident has self-isolated.

If you are infected, you can stop self-isolating when you have been symptom-free for 48 hours. If you have tested positive, but are symptom-free, you should self-isolate in your room for seven days starting from the day the test was done.

Close contacts must be tested twice, generally 4 and 6 days after you were last in close contact with the infected person. If you are a close contact, you must comply with the Danish Health Authority’s guidance. Learn more in What to do if you are a close contact of a person who has tested positive for novel coronavirus.
When a resident is self-isolating in his or her room, you must make a plan so that one or more residents help the infected resident with cooking and shopping. Infected residents must eat in their own room. If infected residents have to leave their room to use shared toilet and bathroom facilities, they must keep a distance to the other residents and clean thoroughly after using the toilet and bathroom.

If it is difficult for you to ensure that an infected resident can self-isolate in his or her room, you can contact your municipality, which can refer to the municipal isolation facilities. In connection with the Danish Government’s new infection prevention measures, which apply from 7 December 2020 to 2 January 2021, user fees for meals in connection with voluntary isolation stays have been suspended at national level. This means that the use of municipal isolation facilities is free of charge in this period. There was previously a charge of DKK 150 per day for meals.

For a period of 14 days after a resident has been infected, everyone using the kitchen and living on the same floor as the infected person must pay extra attention to any possible COVID-19 symptoms.

4. Would you like to know more?

Socialising during the COVID-19 epidemic. Guidance on how we can be together while also staying safe and preventing the spread of infection

What to do if you test positive for novel coronavirus (long version). Learn more about what to do if you test positive and are confirmed infected with novel coronavirus.

Important guidance if you have tested positive for novel coronavirus (short version). Abbreviated version of What to do if you test positive for novel coronavirus.

What to do if you are a close contact of a person who has tested positive for novel coronavirus (long version). Learn more about what to do if you are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for novel coronavirus.

Important guidance for close contacts (short version). Abbreviated version of What to do if you are a close contact of a person who has tested positive for novel coronavirus.

Face masks. Guidance on our website on when and how to use a face mask and which types are suitable in public areas.

Prevent infection. Guidance on our website on how to protect yourself and others from infection.

Posters and other material. The Danish Health Authority has prepared a number of materials on prevention of the spread of infection, which can be freely downloaded and shared from our website.

Read more about novel coronavirus and COVID-19 at sst.dk/en/English/Corona-eng
Mark with distance tape where to queue for, for example, the toilets or the buffet.

Striped or red tape may signal warning or no access. Use red or striped tape if you want to signal that people must not stand or sit in a specific place.

Place a hand sanitiser dispenser where people pass by, for example at entrances, at the buffet and at the entrance to toilets. Make it visible with a sign.

Remind people to use their elbow or only touch with clean hands by placing a reminder over light switches, door handles or other surfaces touched by many people. Visualise invisible viruses and bacteria by sticking icons of bacteria on door handles.

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1 Photos by iNudgeyou