Guidance from the Danish Health Authority

Guidance for people at higher risk

If you are at higher risk of becoming severely ill from COVID-19, you can still do many of the same things you did before the COVID-19 epidemic. The recommendations can help protect you and your relatives as much as possible from infection with novel coronavirus.

16 February 2021
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
- Sore throat
- Fever
- Loss of sense of taste and smell
- Difficulty breathing
- 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.
1. What does it mean to be at higher risk?

Most people who become infected with novel coronavirus will have a mild and short course of illness, with the most common symptoms being fever, dry cough and tiredness, from which they recover without treatment. Especially younger people may be infected with novel coronavirus without having symptoms.

Some persons are at higher risk of becoming more seriously ill if infected with novel coronavirus. These are persons with certain conditions and diseases.

People who become seriously ill typically experience that their symptoms get worse on day 4 to 7 after the first symptoms, with difficulty breathing, worsening of coughing and an increase in fever. They may need treatment in hospital. Most will be discharged after a few days of hospitalisation, while a few will need more intensive treatment and perhaps also respiratory treatment. However, most get well again, also persons who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
2. Who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19?

Some already know their disease or condition, and they can assess for themselves whether they are at higher risk. If you have a disease and you are not sure whether you are at higher risk, you should contact the doctor in charge of your hospital treatment or your own doctor for information.

You can see who are at higher risk in the box below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Persons aged 80 or older</strong>: You are at higher risk regardless of whether you are healthy or have chronic diseases and conditions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Persons aged 65-79</strong>: Many healthy individuals in this age group are not at higher risk, but if, for example, you have chronic diseases or reduced mental and physical health etc., you may be at higher risk.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Persons aged under 65</strong>: Very few people are at higher risk, but people in the age group with certain chronic diseases, chronic diseases that are difficult to control, overweight with a body mass index (BMI) of 35 or above, and/or who have a weakened immune system are thought to be at higher risk.</td>
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<td>• <strong>Certain children and young people with chronic disease</strong>: Diseases and conditions that result in a higher risk in adults cannot be transferred directly to children. Children and young people who may be at higher risk are typically those who were already subject to special precautions before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, for example special conditions in their attendance of school/daycare. These children have diseases or conditions that are typically monitored in special outpatient clinics.</td>
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<td>• <strong>Residents in nursing homes</strong>: Residents in nursing homes are at higher risk as they are often elderly and have chronic diseases, poor functional ability and fragile health.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Pregnant women</strong>: Pregnant women are regarded as being at higher risk to protect both the pregnant woman and her unborn child.</td>
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If you are unsure whether you are at higher risk, please talk to your doctor.

In addition to people at higher risk, some individuals may be particularly vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic, e.g. due to an increased risk of infection. This applies, for example, to people who are socially or financially disadvantaged, such as persons without a fixed address, as they often have poor health and chronic diseases. They also have more limited access to healthcare services.
3. Guidance for people at higher risk

If you are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, you can still do many of the same things you did before the COVID-19 epidemic. For example, you can go to work, take part in leisure activities, look after your grandchildren or the like.

If, already before the COVID-19 epidemic, you took special precautions in your everyday life to avoid becoming infected with other diseases, for example due to a weakened immune system, you should continue to do so.

Guidance for people at higher risk

1. You must be particularly diligent in complying with the Danish Health Authority’s six general recommendations and ask others to be considerate
2. Wear a face mask. The use of face masks is mandatory in many circumstances, but it is also sound advice to wear a face mask in other situations where it is not possible to keep a distance of 2 metres to others.
3. Consider whether changes should be made at your workplace.

The Danish Health Authority's six general recommendations

Persons at higher risk, as well as their relatives, are recommended to pay particular attention to following the Danish Health Authority’s six recommendations for how to prevent infection.

1. Self-isolate if you have symptoms of COVID-19, have tested positive or are a close contact of someone infected with novel coronavirus. Self-isolation means:
   • That you should stay at home and not meet with people you do not live with.
   • That you must avoid close contact with other members of your household.
   • That you need to pay extra attention to hygiene and cleaning.

Remember that relatives of people at higher risk who have tested positive for novel coronavirus or who are close contacts of an infected person may be granted a voluntary out-of-home stay in a self-isolation facility by the authorities in their municipality.

2. Wash your hands often or use hand sanitiser
   • You need to pay close attention to hand hygiene when you have touched contact points that many people touch in public areas. This may, for example, be door handles in shops, elevator buttons, Dankort terminals, ATMs, handles on buses, armrests in restaurants and café chairs etc.
   • Always wash your hands when you come home.
   • Avoid touching your nose, mouth and eyes if your hands are not clean. Virus typically spreads from your hands to the mucous membranes of your nose, mouth and eyes, but it cannot be transmitted through your skin.

3. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or a paper tissue – not into your hands. If you accidentally cough into your hands, wash or disinfect them afterwards.
4. Do not shake hands, hug or kiss as a greeting – limit physical contact
   - Limit close physical contact, for example hugging, to a small group of persons. This could be your partner, grandchildren and a few friends. Keep a distance of 2 metres from everyone else.
   - Talk openly with your closest family members about who and how many people they are seeing, under what conditions etc., so that you know the risk of being in close contact with them.

5. Make sure to clean thoroughly – both in your home and at your workplace.
   - Be particularly careful with cleaning in your home, especially contact points such as light switches, door handles, buttons on coffee machines and the like. Clean as usual with ordinary detergents, but do it often and be extra thorough.
   - Change and wash your clothes when you come home if you have been in contact with many people. Wash your clothes according to the washing instructions.

6. Keep your distance and ask others to be considerate
   - Keep a distance of at least 2 metres from others wherever possible. Ask others to be considerate by keeping their distance.
     The Danish Health Authority has designed a badge that can signal to others that they must show consideration by keeping their distance. The badge is available from pharmacies or it can be ordered through a number of patient associations and organisations.
   - Avoid staying in places where there are many people, for example on trains, buses or the metro during rush hour, or in shops at times when there are many people.
   - Be especially careful about keeping your distance from people who have possible COVID-19 symptoms or who you know are at risk of being infected.
   - Talk to hosts and organisers of social events and leisure activities that you would like to participate in, so that they can be held in a way that reduces the risk of infection and makes you feel safe.

We encourage you to comply with the general recommendations even if you have been vaccinated.

Use of face masks

For persons at higher risk, it is recommended to keep a minimum distance of 2 metres. However, it will not always be possible to keep a distance of 2 metres in public areas, during leisure activities and at work without this restricting people’s day-to-day life and social life.

In these situations, face masks may be a supplementary measure to prevent infection. This applies both if you are at higher risk yourself or in situations in which your relatives have to be in particularly close contact with you, for example if you need nursing and care.

The face mask can function as an extra protective layer and can also have the added effect of sending a signal to the people around you that you want to take extra care of yourself.

Always have a face mask with you when you are in public areas, so that you can put it on if necessary.

As a person at higher risk, you should always use a type I factory-made CE-labelled disposable face mask, as they have a documented high filtration rate.
If you cannot use a face mask, you can use a face shield or visor. You should be aware that a face shield does not provide the same protection as a face mask.

Read more about how to use face masks correctly at the Danish Health Authority’s website.

Specific measures at the workplace

Most persons at higher risk can go to work as usual if the Danish Health Authority’s guidance on how to prevent infection can be followed. Therefore, as a general rule, you do not need to be transferred to another function or work from home, not even if you have contact with many people on a day-to-day basis. However, it is important that you talk to your employer about whether some changes should be made in relation to your work tasks or working conditions, so that infection is prevented as much as possible and you can feel safe when you go to work.

Guidance for your employer

- Make sure that it is possible for the employee to keep a distance of 2 metres from colleagues, clients, customers and other people, or that barriers are put up, for example a plastic or glass screen at a payment counter, or that it is possible to use face masks.
- Ensure that meetings are held with due consideration for persons at higher risk, including by keeping a distance of at least 2 metres, keeping meetings as short as possible and with the possibility of video participation.
- Ensure easy access to wash basins with water and liquid soap, possibly hand sanitiser and access to disposable towels.
- Make sure that all employees are informed of the need to keep good hand hygiene, including washing their hands when they arrive for work and before they go home, and possibly several times during the day depending on the activity.
- Ensure attention to daily and regular cleaning and possibly disinfection of surfaces such as tables and chairs, as well as contact points, for example toilets, door handles, switches, coffee machines and the like.
- Make sure that the employees can use personal tools and devices that are not shared with others, for example telephone and keyboard etc., and that they have the possibility of cleaning them frequently.
- Make sure that all employees have been instructed to go home and stay at home if they develop symptoms that could give rise to suspicion of COVID-19 and that the employees know about the symptoms.

Talk to your employer if you find it difficult to follow the above recommendations.

Your employer is responsible for ensuring that the working environment at your workplace is generally safe, including that you and your colleagues are informed about possible sources of infection, for example contact points, and that it is possible to follow the Danish Health Authority’s guidance on how to prevent infection. Your employer must also make sure that you and your colleagues know the symptoms of COVID-19 and that you must stay at home and self-isolate if you develop symptoms of COVID-19.
You must discuss and agree the specific measures with your employer. At some workplaces, there may be limited possibilities for transferring you to another function, but this must not be an obstacle if you need it. Any limited possibilities for transferring the employee to another task or function must be resolved locally, and must not be an obstacle to this.

If necessary, you can contact your treating doctor at the hospital or your own doctor for a specific assessment of your risk at the workplace. If you have doubts about workplace conditions and your rights etc., you can seek advice from trade unions and similar organisations if necessary.

**Guidance for people at higher risk who work in certain functions**

- If you are employed in the healthcare sector or the social services and elderly care sector, you must not perform tasks or functions in your work where you participate in nursing, care or treatment of or have close contact with persons with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
- If you are pregnant and employed in the healthcare sector, the social services and elderly care sector or in daycare facilities for 0-6-year-olds, and if you have work functions with close contact with patients, citizens or children, you should be transferred to other work tasks where you do not have close contact with others from full 28 pregnancy weeks (28+0) and for the rest of your pregnancy. If it is not possible to transfer you to another function or to working from home, you must go on sick leave.

**What if I get ill?**

You can read more about COVID-19 symptoms and what to do if you become ill in the Danish Health Authority’s information material *What to do if you have symptoms of COVID-19* and *What to do if you test positive for novel coronavirus*.

If you become ill with COVID-19 and need a medical assessment, you must contact your doctor. Outside normal opening hours, you must call the out-of-hours medical service or the medical helpline in your region.

You can always call your doctor if you are worried, also about other illnesses than COVID-19.
4. Are you a relative of someone at higher risk?

If you are a relative of someone who is at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, it is natural that you may be worried about infecting them.

Guidance if you live with someone at higher risk

- Pay special attention to following the Danish Health Authority’s general recommendations for how to prevent infection. Also help your relatives and other people you live with remember the recommendations – including children.
- Keep an extra close eye on symptoms that could be COVID-19. Self-isolate immediately if you experience symptoms. This also applies if you have mild symptoms or if you are a close contact of someone infected with novel coronavirus.
  If you have been infected with novel coronavirus or are a close contact of an infected person and live with someone who is at higher risk, you may be granted an out-of-home stay at a suitable facility. Please contact your municipality to learn more.

Precautions if you live with someone at higher risk

Even if you live together with someone who is at higher risk, you may participate in social contexts, go to work, attend school or kindergarten etc. like you usually do.

If you are employed in the healthcare sector or the social services and elderly care sector and live with someone who is at higher risk, you must not participate in planned nursing, care or treatment or have close contact with persons with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, and you should be transferred to another task or function.

Use a face mask if you are with someone who is at higher risk

As a general rule, you should keep a distance of 2 metres, wherever possible, when visiting someone at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 with whom you do not live or have any other regular close contact. If this is not possible, for example because there is a need for nursing and care, you can consider wearing a face mask to protect that person. Remember that you should use a factory-made type I CE-marked face mask.

You should also show consideration for the wishes of the person at higher risk in relation to whether others should wear face masks.

If you have been vaccinated

If, as a relative, you have been vaccinated against COVID-19, it is still important that you comply with the general recommendations for how to prevent infection. The reason for this is that the vaccines are not 100 per cent effective, and there is consequently a small risk that you may become infected and ill with COVID-19 even if you have been fully vaccinated. Furthermore, it has not yet been documented whether vaccination prevents persons who have been vaccinated from carrying the virus and thus infecting others without having symptoms themselves.
Remember to get the best out of life

It is important to remember to get the best out of life while also taking care not to become infected with novel coronavirus. If you are or your relative is at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and you are also in the last part of your life, it is important to get the best out of the time you have left. Here, the need for quality of life may be more important than the risk of becoming infected with COVID-19. Consider following only the advice that does not go beyond the personal contact between you and your relatives.
5. Want to know more?

If you have any questions about your illness or need a specific assessment of your own situation, please call your treating doctor at the hospital or your own doctor.

Many patient organisations also have information and advice on COVID-19.

If you are a person at higher risk, you also have the possibility of being vaccinated against influenza and pneumococci.

The Danish Health Authority’s information material

Please go to our website to see a list of all current publications in English - such as pamphlets, posters and films.