

Coronavirus fact sheet for retirement village residents and families

Prepared by the Retirement Villages Association based on information from the Ministry of Health

12th March 2020

What is Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). A novel coronavirus is a new strain of coronavirus that hasn't previously been identified in humans. In January 2020, officials identified a new coronavirus, COVID-19.

How worried should I be?

The current chances of catching COVID-19 in New Zealand are low. As of March 2020, there are currently only a handful of cases in the country and the risk of an ongoing outbreak is considered low-to-moderate. For most people, the virus causes only mild symptoms. You are at greatest risk of infection if you have had face-to-face contact (closer than one metre for longer than 15 minutes) with someone confirmed as having COVID-19.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

COVID-19 symptoms are similar to a range of other respiratory illnesses such as influenza (flu) and do not necessarily mean that you have COVID-19. Symptoms can include fever, coughing and difficulty breathing. Difficulty breathing is a sign of possible pneumonia and requires immediate medical attention. If you have symptoms and are concerned, talk to one of our staff, in the same way you would let them know any time you are feeling unwell.

How is COVID-19 spread?

The scientific evidence confirms that coronavirus is spread by droplets. This means that when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks, they may generate droplets containing the virus. These droplets are too large to stay in the air for long, so they quickly settle on surrounding surfaces. Droplet-spread diseases can be spread by:

- coughing and sneezing
- close personal contact
- contact with an object or surface with viral particles on it and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

That's why it's really important to practice good hygiene by following the simple steps outlined above - regularly wash and thoroughly dry hands and cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.

How long does it take to develop symptoms of COVID-19 after being exposed?

It is still unknown how long it takes for a person to develop symptoms after being exposed to someone with the virus. Based on the characteristics of other coronaviruses, it is likely to be between two and 14 days.

Are retirement villages a safe place to live and visit?

Yes, retirement villages provide comprehensive support and care for residents. We have robust procedures and systems in place to manage any infections or flu and our staff are trained and experienced.

Prevention for residents - how to protect yourself and others

You can take some simple steps to help stop the spread of diseases like COVID-19.

- Avoid close contact with people with cold or flu-like illnesses
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze, using a disposable tissue or your clothing, (for example your sleeve)
- Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with water and soap and dry them thoroughly:
 - o before eating or handling food
 - o after using the toilet
 - o after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose or wiping children's noses
 - o after caring for sick people
- Try not to shake hands, hug or kiss people
- Avoid touching your face

Should I wear a mask in public areas?

For most people, face masks are not recommended. There is limited evidence that face masks prevent transmission of disease. Good respiratory and hand hygiene is more important, so keep following the simple steps described above. However, your doctor may specifically recommend you wear a mask because you have a particular health condition.

Is it safe to attend group activities and village events?

You can continue attending these activities as normal, as long as you take the simple steps described above.

This would only change if:

- a resident or staff member at our village was confirmed as having COVID-19, and
- you have had a 'close contact' with the infected person

We will let you know if a resident or staff member is confirmed as having COVID-19.

We are monitoring the situation daily and adopting practices advised by the various authorities to protect everyone as much as possible.

Keeping a record of visitors

While the risk of COVID-19 remains, please keep a record of your visitors. The village will have a form for you to use – please record their names, address, phone numbers, date and time of the visit, and the purpose. The record allows everyone who's been in contact with you to be traced if necessary.

What are the considerations in regards to travelling?

If you are planning a trip to a country with confirmed cases of COVID-19, please tell your Village Manager.

For people returning from overseas, we ask you to consider staying away from the village or to isolate yourself in your home if:

- you have been in, or transited through, any countries with confirmed COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days, excluding Australia and New Zealand
- you have had family or friends staying from countries with confirmed COVID-19 cases- you should also not visit the village for 14 days after the guests leave
- anyone living in your household becomes ill with flu-like symptoms and they have been in areas affected by COVID-19
- you have any signs of illness. This is especially important in the months ahead during the normal flu season.

If you choose to self-isolate within a village, we will support you – you just need to let your manager know your intentions.

How do I self-isolate in a village?

If you've travelled to a category 1 or 2 country (the village manager can give you information on which countries those are), or you've been in contact with someone who has, you will need to self-isolate. You should :

- Talk to your village manager about your intention to self-isolate. She/he will do everything they can to support you, including arranging for food and supplies to be delivered.
- Avoid all contact with other residents, village staff, contractors and any visitors for 14 days from the date you left the category 1 or 2 country. For example, if you left China on 18 February and landed in NZ on 20 February, you must self-isolate for 14 days from 18 February (i.e. until 3 March).
- If you're with a partner who hasn't travelled, minimise close contact with them by avoiding situations where you may have face-to-face contact closer than 1 metre for more than 15 minutes. Your partner does not need to self-isolate provided these precautions are followed, please see the link at the bottom of this page.¹
- You should not share crockery and cutlery, towels, pillows or other items with other people in your home. After using these items, wash them thoroughly with soap and water, place them in the dishwasher for cleaning or wash them in your washing machine.
- Your emotional and mental health is important. It is normal to feel stressed or lonely when self-isolating, but there are some things you can do to feel better, such as contacting your family and friends, and talk about how you feel. We also recommend sticking to a routine such as having regular mealtimes, bedtimes and exercising.
- If you feel you are not coping, it is important to talk with a health professional.

Visitors to the village

Visitors, both domestic and international, are welcome to visit you, but they should not stay overnight and stay away from the community centre. If they're from a country with COVID-19, please make sure they stay more than a metre away from you and do not share eating and drinking utensils, linen and try not to touch each other.

If the visitor is from a category 1 or 2 country they should not enter the village. Please be very careful about meeting them; keep your distance and don't touch each other.

If you become unwell, contact Healthline

Contact Healthline for free on **0800 358 5453**, or your GP if you begin to feel unwell. The symptoms of COVID-19 are cough, fever, and shortness of breath.

For all non-health related questions, call **0800 Government (0800 779 997)**.

We strongly recommend that you get your normal flu injection to minimise the chances of falling ill from the usual flu.

Further information

Comprehensive and up to date information can be found on the Ministry of Health website www.moh.govt.nz

¹See the Ministry of Health's website <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-self-isolation>