

## **Managing Possible or Confirmed COVID-19** **at Home**

**These are written for age 14 and older**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

**If you have an underlying medical condition such as asthma, diabetes, congestive heart failure, lung disease or kidney disease, you must be under the care of a medical provider.**

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) has a website titled [\*What to Do If You Are Sick\*](#), if you have possible or confirmed COVID-19. This is very good for isolation procedures and when to seek medical attention. It provides minimal advice for taking care of yourself at home.

In the very early stages of a COVID-19 infection the most common clinical features are fever, fatigue, dry cough, loss of appetite and achiness. Upper respiratory symptoms and gastrointestinal symptoms are less common but may be present.

**Simple early measures taken at home which work for most bronchial infections, will make you more comfortable. If you can keep your body and lungs healthier, there is the possibility it may help you mount a stronger challenge to this virus. These measures have no side effects, so there is no downside to following them.**

#### ***When to seek emergency medical attention***

- ***Trouble breathing or significant shortness of breath on exertion***
- ***Severe, persistent pain or pressure in the chest***
- ***New confusion***
- ***Inability to wake or stay awake***
- ***Bluish lips or face (can indicate low oxygen levels in your blood)***

***Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.***

### **PATIENT PROTOCOL:**

1. **Rest and Stay at Home**
2. **Stay Hydrated.** Drink 6-8 glasses fluids daily-juice, water, soups. Avoid alcohol. Fluids keep you healthier and thin your pulmonary secretions. Your urine should be colorless or a very light yellow. **If the urine is becoming darker, you are getting dehydrated.**

3. **Do Not Smoke or Vape. Any smoke is an irritant. This includes marijuana.**
4. **Deep Breathing Exercises during the day.** When you are ill and breathing with shallow breaths, some lung tissue can collapse (atelectasis). This makes you more prone to pneumonia.

A London hospital doctor, Dr. Sarfaraz Munshi describes a breathing technique that could have significant preventive value. He urges patients to begin practicing the breathing technique at the start of your infection. His following pulmonary program is backed up by the chief medical officer of the American Lung Association. The video of this program can be seen on youtube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwLzAdriec0>

**Dizziness can occur so do this pulmonary program safely sitting.**

- a. **Take 5 deep breaths in and each time hold the breath for 5 seconds.**
- b. **On the 6<sup>th</sup> deep breath, you will take it in and do a big cough, covering your mouth. This is one cycle.**
- c. **Now repeat a second cycle.**
- d. **Then lay on your stomach on the bed with a pillow under your chest taking slightly deeper than normal breaths for the next 10 minutes.** Most of your lung tissue is towards your back so laying in the prone position helps keep the smaller airways open.
- e. **Repeat this several times a day.**

**Purpose of this technique:** The initial deep breaths help all the airways to open up. You want any mucus to dislodge and be removed by the big cough at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> breath.

5. Simple **leg exercises** can be helpful. When you are ill and weak and not moving too much, the leg muscles get very weak. Two exercises to keep your legs stronger and improve circulation are:
  - a) Lying flat on your back on the bed, push a knee down against the bed. This causes the thigh muscle (quadriceps) to contract. Hold the contraction for 10 seconds. Do 5-10 repetitions and repeat with the other leg. Do this 3-4 times daily.
  - b) Flex your feet towards and away from you 10-20 times. Do this 3-4 times daily or anytime you think of it.
6. **Steam inhalations may be helpful to help healing and loosen mucus in the upper and lower airways.** There are no controlled research studies. Check with your medical provider. Steam 3 times daily for 10-15 minutes each time. **This recommendation is for patients who are 14 years and older.**

**Do not stand over a stove since you do not want to burn yourself.**

**Ways to get steam:**

- A facial steamer is simple.
- You can sit at the sink and put on the hot water. Put a towel over your head to capture the steam.
- You can sit in the bathroom with the hot shower on. You do not want to stand for a long time in a hot shower when you

are ill with fever, because blood can pool in your legs and you can get faint.

7. **Gargles** are very helpful if your throat is sore. Put a touch of salt (very small amount) in a glass of warm (not hot) water. Gargle periodically during the day. Steaming will also help your sore throat and can replace a gargle.
8. **Humidification**-A small (1 to 1.5 gallon) steam vaporizer or cool mist humidifier is very helpful when the heating systems are on and the air is very dry. Air conditioning can cause dryness in the room. **A steam vaporizer should be safely kept away from children to prevent them from tipping it over and burning themselves.**

**Saline nasal spray**-you can use this at any time to help humidify the nose.

### **For Fever, Headache, and Muscle Aching**

**UpToDate** is a clinical medical program that gives evidence-based advice to medical providers. It recommends acetaminophen as the preferred medication to reduce fever. If a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) such as ibuprofen (Motrin) is needed to relieve symptoms, it recommends that it be used in the lowest effective dose.

**Acetaminophen (Tylenol) comes in 325 mg or 500 mg tablets.** Take as little as possible since some fever probably helps to fight infection. If you have an underlying medical condition, check the dose with your medical provider.

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