FACT SHEET

FAQ: What is COVID-19 and what can I do to protect myself and others

Older people are more susceptible to illness associated with COVID-19. This Fact Sheet informs about what COVID-19 is, how it is spread and what you can do to protect yourself and others.

What is COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS)?

COVID-19 is the disease that is caused by a new Coronavirus and causes mild to severe respiratory infections. The virus has now become a global pandemic.

How is it spread?

The virus can spread from person to person through:

- close contact with an infectious person (including in the 24 hours before they started showing symptoms)
- contact with droplets from an infected person who is coughing or sneezing
- touching objects or surfaces (like doorknobs or tables) that have droplets on them from an infected person, and then touching your mouth, face or eyes.

What are the symptoms?

Most people with the virus are displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat or fatigue and although COVID-19 virus is of serious concern, people with these symptoms may be suffering from a cold, flu, allergies or other respiratory illness and not COVID-19.

What restrictions are in place relating to aged care facilities?

The Australian Government has put in place restrictions to protect older Australians living in residential aged care facilities. The restrictions are to ensure that if you don't absolutely have to visit a resident in an aged care facility, please don't go.

When will these restrictions finish?

These are temporary changes and will be relaxed on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer and State and Territory Chief Health Officers. You should plan for these changes to be in place for a number of months.

Why is this virus so dangerous for older people?

The risk of serious illness from COVID-19 increases with age. To date the highest rate of fatalities is among older people, particularly those with other serious health conditions or a weakened immune system.

There is currently no cure or vaccine for COVID-19.

We should be aware of people living with dementia or some other form of cognitive impairment where the person is not able to express or communicate verbally their pain or discomfort.

To protect older Australians and people with compromised immune systems, we all need to work together to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

How can we protect ourselves?

You can protect yourself and help prevent spreading the virus to others if you:
- Wash your hands regularly for 30 seconds, with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitisers
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that you have touched
- Cover your nose and mouth with a disposable tissue or flexed elbow when you cough or sneeze
- Avoid close contact (1.5 meters) with other people
- Stay home and self-isolate from others in the household if you feel unwell

DO NOT - touch your eyes, nose, or mouth if your hands are not clean

Who can I talk to about this if I need support?

- Call the individual facility to understand what processes are in place.
- Talk to family members and friends
- Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636 for support
- Relationships Australia (Darwin) - 8923 4999 or darwinseniors@ra-nt.org.au for counselling

How can Seniors and Disability Rights Service can support you

If you have concerns that the rights of an older person are not being met or you are worried about an older person's safety and welfare, call SDRS.

Seniors and Disability Rights Service
Respect Value Protect

Ph: 1800 037 072