

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Diagnoses Associated with Elevated Risk of Severe Illness or Death Following COVID-19 Infection ODP Announcement 20-076

AUDIENCE:

All interested parties.

PURPOSE:

To provide information about diagnoses and conditions associated with elevated risk for severe illness when an individual is infected with COVID-19.

DISCUSSION:

Some individuals experience no [symptoms](#) or mild symptoms when infected with the COVID-19 virus, whereas others experience serious illness or death as a result of infection.

Emerging evidence has identified diseases and conditions that may also elevate the risk of severe illness or death when an individual is infected with COVID-19.

When an individual has one of more of these diagnoses or conditions, COVID-19 infection is more likely to result in serious illness or death.

To be clear, individuals with the diagnoses or conditions discussed below are not at higher risk of *contracting* COVID-19, but rather are at higher risk of serious illness or death should they become infected with the virus.

DIAGNOSES AND CONDITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH ELEVATED RISK

Individuals with one or more of the following diagnoses or conditions are at higher risk of serious illness or death should they become infected with the virus:

- Alzheimer's or Senile Dementia
- Asthma
- Atrial Fibrillation
- Cancer
- Chronic Kidney Disease/End Stage Renal Disease

- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
- Congenital Heart Abnormality
- Cystic Fibrosis
- Diabetes
- Heart Failure
- History of Acute Myocardial Infarction
- HIV/AIDS
- Home Ventilator Use
- Hypertension
- Inflammatory/Autoimmune disease
- Ischemic Heart Disease
- Liver Disease
- Obesity
- Pulmonary Fibrosis
- Pulmonary Hypertension
- Stroke/Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA)
- Tobacco Use
- Vitamin D Deficiency

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is very important that individuals at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 take actions to reduce contracting the virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the following steps to avoid COVID-19 infection:

- Remain at home as much as possible and avoid large gatherings or places where people congregate when away from home.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after having been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Proper use of hand sanitizer includes covering all surfaces of one's hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- Practice social distancing by maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet between oneself and people outside one's household.
- Keep away from people who are sick or symptomatic.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched services such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- Wear a mask when in public and when visiting with others.
- Use telehealth services whenever possible.

Additional resources for ways to avoid COVID-19 infection can be found at the links below:

- [COVID-19 Health and Safety Guide](#)
- [Don't Get Lax](#)
- [Introducing & Maintaining Remote Supports](#)
- [Teaching New Skills](#)

It is also important to offer and encourage activities that improve an individual's overall health and well-being. Such activities will not only improve an individual's overall status but will also address the chronic conditions that place an individual at higher risk for more severe outcomes if they contract COVID-19. Activities that improve health and well-being include, but are not limited to:

- [Staying active](#), even when remaining at home.
- Pursuing opportunities for wellness. [Relaxation](#) and leisure activities such as hobbies, meditation, yoga, and enjoying nature will promote a healthier immune system.
- Enjoying nutritious, well-balanced meals.
- Taking medications and following treatment plans for chronic health conditions as directed by a care practitioner.
- Promptly addressing any current [physical](#) or [mental health](#) concerns.

An individual's health care practitioner can give recommendations on these and other activities that improve health and well-being.

Additional resources for activities and health and well-being can be found at the links below:

- [The Importance of Sleep Hygiene](#)
- [Recognizing Signs: Mental Health First Aid Classes Available](#)
- [Emotional Pain During a Pandemic](#)
- [Modifying Goals and Routines](#)
- [Risk Identification and Reporting](#)
- [New Rules in Familiar Places](#)
- [Self-Advocacy: Advocating for your Health Needs](#)

CONTACT:

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