

GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
Parivar Kalyan Bhawan, Sector 34-A, Chandigarh

No. COVID-19/NHM/Pb/20/1605-1609

Date 21 July 2020 Chandigarh

To

1. Principal Secretary, Department of Social Security, Women and Child Development, Punjab.
2. All Divisional Commissioners, Punjab.
3. Director, Department of Social Security, Women and Child Development, Punjab.
4. All Deputy Commissioners, Punjab.
5. All the Civil Surgeons of Punjab.

Subject: Advisory for the special care of Elderlies/Senior citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Corona virus Disease 2019 (COVID -19) is a systemic disease caused by a novel Corona virus (SARS-CoV-2), transmitted in most instances through respiratory droplets, direct contact with cases and also through contaminated surfaces/objects. Timely and correct information and knowledge about the corona virus is the key to control the pandemic.

The elderly citizens aged 60 or above are particularly susceptible to COVID-19 due to their low immunity & body reserves and co-existing illnesses. The course of COVID-19 disease in elderlies tends to be severe resulting in increased fatalities than younger population. It is, therefore, essential to follow certain preventive guidelines by the senior citizens (and their caretakers), so as to prevent the spread of the COVID-19.

The below mentioned advisory is for all such individuals who are 60 years or above and have one or more chronic conditions such as:

- Chronic (long-term) respiratory disease such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), bronchiectasis, post tuberculousequelae, interstitial lung disease.
- Chronic heart disease such as heart failure.
- Chronic kidney disease.
- Chronic liver disease, such as alcoholic and viral hepatitis.
- Chronic neurologic conditions such as Parkinson's disease, stroke.

- Diabetes Mellitus.
- Hypertension/ Increased Blood pressure.
- Cancer

I. General Advisory

1. All senior citizens are advised to stay inside the house at all the times.
2. The senior citizens should avoid having any visitors at home.
3. If a meeting is essential, the sitting arrangement should be such that a minimum distance of 1 metre amongst the participants is maintained. Handshakes/hugs to greet each other should be avoided.
4. If an elderly citizen is living alone, he/she can consider depending on their healthy neighbours for acquiring essentials for home.
5. Always maintain hygiene by washing hands especially before having meals and after using the washroom.
6. Wash the hands with soap for at least 40 seconds by applying the soap gently on the palm and back of the hand including web spaces between the fingers and space as well as between the finger and the thumb and the wrist.
7. Alcohol-based sanitizer (minimum 70% ethyl alcohol v/v) can also be used. The sanitizers are to be refilled/replaced frequently. Use a minimum of 3ml of the sanitizer (approximately 2 pushes of sanitizer dispenser) on DRY HANDS for at least 30 seconds for good hygienic hand disinfection.
8. The frequently touched objects such as spectacles, dentures, medicine boxes, utensils etc should be properly cleaned before and after use.
9. In case of a cough/sneeze, the elderly/caretaker should use the handkerchief to cover the face which shall then be kept in his/her own pocket/purse in a manner that the surface of the handkerchief exposed to the cough/sneeze shall not touch the other parts of the belongings directly.
10. In case the person is not carrying the handkerchief he/she should cough/sneeze into the *flexed/bent elbow*.
11. In either case, the person should immediately hand wash with soap in the manner prescribed his hands/other exposed surfaces to cough/sneeze.

12. The elderly should refrain from touching face, mouth, nose and eyes with his hands at all times.
13. The elderly should not spit except when absolutely essential and only in the washbasin of the toilet.
14. The elderlies are advised to preferably keep the set of Helpline numbers of the Government/ relatives handy for immediate use in case of any emergency.
15. The elderlies are encouraged to download “COVA APP” developed by the Government of Punjab for the correct, timely and authentic information on COVID-19.

II. Specific Advisory

1. Avoid all small and large gatherings- social, religious etc at all cost.
2. The senior citizens are advised to remain actively mobile within the house.
3. The elderlies can consider doing light exercise and yoga at home.
4. They should ensure proper nutrition through home cooked fresh hot meals, frequent hydration to prevent dehydration (caution for those suffering from Kidney/Liver disease) and also take fresh juices to boost their immunity.
5. The senior citizens are advised to take their prescribed medicines as advised by their doctor. They are advised to keep an adequate stock of all such prescribed medicines readily available at all times.
6. The senior citizens are encouraged to self-monitor their health. If they develop fever, cough and/or breathing difficulty or any other health issue, they should contact the nearest health care facility and the medical advice should be meticulously followed.
7. The senior citizens should avoid any self-prescribed/prescribed by family, friends etc. medication/remedy and should always consult the nearest health care facility. The senior citizens are advised to refrain from visiting any medical office/hospital for a routine check-up. As far as possible, they should opt for tele-consultation with their physician for all the enquiries. The tele-counselling helpline no of Govt of Punjab is 1800-180-4104.
8. They may consider postponing their elective surgeries (if any) like cataract surgery or total knee replacement.

9. They should take help from family members, if needed, via video conferencing or other electronic media.

III. Advisory for senior citizens on mental well-being

1. The senior citizens should constantly communicate with relatives at home.
2. They can communicate with neighbours, provided social distancing is followed, and gathering of people is avoided.
3. The older individual should be provided with a peaceful environment.
4. They should rediscover old hobbies like painting, listening to music, reading etc.
5. They should make sure to access and believe only the most reliable sources of information.
6. They should avoid tobacco, alcohol and other drugs to avoid loneliness or boredom.
7. Contact the nearest medical facility in case of:
 - i) Change in mental status, such as excessively drowsy during the day, not responding, speaking inappropriately.
 - ii) New onset of inability to recognise relative which he/she could do before.

IV. Advisory for the caregivers of the dependent senior citizens

1. The caregivers should have a sense of connect and empathy with the Senior citizens even if the senior citizen is in a bad mood/ restive mood.
2. The caregivers should wash their hands in the manner prescribed before helping the older individual.
3. The caregivers should cover nose and mouth adequately using a mask while attending on the senior citizen.
4. The masks shall be worn in a manner that it snugly covers the nose as well as the mouth.
5. The cloth mask should be washed with soap and water daily after use. If using surgical mask it should be discarded as per procedure. In case an N-95 masks is being worn, it must be used as per maker guidelines.
6. The caregivers should clean the frequently used surfaces. These include a walking cane, walker, wheelchair, bedpan etc.
7. The caregivers should assist the older individual and help her/him in washing hands.

