



COPING WITH COVID-19 AT HOME

Guin Lourens ,RN,PhD

Date: 15 June 2021

Herewith follows some practical advice on what to do when Covid-19 hits home and either yourself or those closest to you are diagnosed with Covid-19. Please note this is merely a guide and does not substitute professional medical advice. Liaise with your doctor, local clinic nurse or emergency services as required.

Symptoms vary from person to person but here follows a possible list:

Headache	Vomiting	Body pain	Chest pain /tight chest
Burning, red eyes	Diarrhoea	Feeling feverish	Cough: dry/ mucous
Sore throat	Burning urine	Tiredness	Struggling to breathe
Runny /blocked nose	Low back/ kidney pain	Loss of taste or smell	Sitting and out of breath

Testing

The coronavirus only starts replicating in your body after 24 hours, so do not test too early. Symptoms would usually start 2 to 5 days after exposure to the coronavirus, but some people have no symptoms at all and are asymptomatic. If you suspect you have Covid-10, you will need to go for a PCR throat swab test in liaison with your doctor, hospital or clinic. One can test positive for 3 months though after initial infection. Antigen swab tests are more indicative of a current infection but not readily available at this stage at all pathology practices.

Call NICD hotline if unsure on 080 002 9999.

There are also antibody tests available, which will indicate if you have had Covid-19 before or for a while. These tests are a rapid finger prick or the ELISA blood test. It takes the body a minimum of 10 to 12 days to produce antibodies, and some people can take up to 4 weeks before they will test positive for antibodies. It is therefore advisable to wait for 2 to 3 weeks before doing the antibody test. For results the rapid test takes 10 minutes and the ELISA 24 hours.

Diagnosis

Once you have a positive Covid-19 diagnosis there are a few important steps to take:

- Immediately inform your employer, your line manager and human resources.
- Inform your close contacts with whom you have spent more than 15 minutes without a mask, and with less than 1,5 metres apart, to self-isolate as well.
- Stay away from family, friends and work. In your home, as far as possible, stay in your own room or own bed and do not share bathrooms, towels or kitchenware such as crockery and cutlery. Sanitize shared bathrooms after use and use a teaspoon of bleach in dishwashing water.

Treatment

Oxygen: Get an oximeter/pulsometer as soon as possible. Check if your medical aid provides one and how quickly it can be collected or delivered. These oximeters can be purchased at pharmacies or online and cost about R500 or less.

Start testing your oxygen levels a few times daily by placing the device over your index finger. The device will also give your pulse rate, which may be higher while you are sick. Oxygen saturation above 98% is best, but many Covid-19 patients are between 92% and 95%. If it goes below 92% contact your doctor/clinic. If it goes below 90% seek emergency medical care immediately. Oxygen concentrators can be hired – enquire from your medical aid or Evergreen Health.

Medication: Always seek the advice of a qualified healthcare provider.

- Vitamins can be used, such as: Vit C 1000 mg /day; Vit D3 5000 IU /day; Zinc 50 or 100 mg /day.
- Paracetamol 500mg to 1000mg can be used every 4 to 6 hours for pain and fever.
- Consult your doctor with regards to mucolytics for tough phlegm, corticosteroids, aspirin, blood thinners and the use of antibiotics, allergy and other newly approved drugs.

Self-care while you are sick

- Drink plenty of liquids such as water, warm or iced tea and other fluids.
- Sit in the sun for 15 minutes per day.
- Try to do short walks.
- Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables, such as soup, stew or a fresh fruit salad.
- Lemon or orange juice with added ginger and honey is an option.
- Plain yoghurt with probiotics can be useful.
- Do deep breathing exercises. Take a deep breath in through your nose, hold for five seconds and breath out through the mouth. Repeat this 5 times.
- If you are struggling with breathing and mucous, you can sit up in bed with pillows behind your back; or lie on your stomach; and move from one side to another every 30 minutes; or move into the prone position on your bed or a carpet with arms folded under your head or outstretched, as pictured below.



Recovery recommendations

- Don't exert yourself unnecessarily, as you need to conserve oxygen.
- Coughing is good as it helps open air sacs in the lungs, that may have clogged with fluid/mucous.
- Change your position at 30 minutes intervals from side to side, to tummy, to sitting.
- Take regular small sips of water to keep your mouth moist. Brush your teeth twice a day.
- Gargle with salt water if you have a sore throat.
- Try and rest or sleep as much as you can.
- Ensure that you are taking in nutritious food. If you don't feel like eating, have small, regular nutritious snacks.

How to get going again and back to work

- Get up and into a routine.
- Get outside when you can and get moving. Start your exercise programme very slowly and check your heartrate.
- Get focused on the day in front of you (not the month or year) and don't live in fear of catastrophes.
- Focus on what you can control and take it easy.
- Don't overschedule your days or evenings.
- You may need more sleep at night initially and find your biorhythm different.
- Follow a healthy diet and start socialising slowly.
- Be kind to yourself to prevent long haul symptoms and protect your mental health.
- **Get vaccinated, but only 3 months after a Covid19 infection and 14 days after any other vaccines e.g., flu**