

## What to do if you suspect COVID-19

Test kits and testing sites are available. The test kit, which consists of a deep nasal swab, will indicate if you have COVID-19 or not. It can take 24 to 72 hours for results depending on the supplier of the test kit and volume of tests.

## COVID-19 Treatment

There currently is no treatment specific to COVID-19 as with many viruses. If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, you will need to be isolated. If you have a mild case, you will be asked to remain in your home and away from others including family members.

## Prevention

The goal is to keep you from having the COVID-19 virus. **Washing your hands** is essential to avoid infection. With spinal cord injury, hand washing is essential when doing self-care. Washing your hands now should be in overdrive. This does not mean a little spritz. Effective hand washing is based on three principles, warm flowing water, soap and friction. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds

Because of your location in a wheelchair, you are at a disadvantage because your head is lower than most standing people. This puts you in a vulnerable position. After being out or interacting with others, **wash your face** as well as your hands. Remember, your face has mucous membranes that allow viruses and bacteria to enter. Wash your hands first then wash your face starting with eye lids, then the rest of your face. Use a clean wash cloth each time you wash your face.

Maintain the **three to six-foot distance** when talking or interacting with others. Respiratory droplets cannot travel that far, so you are protecting yourself from breathing their germs. People might spread the COVID-19 virus but not know they have it. Avoid individuals who have been in large groups or who have recently traveled. Recent guidelines suggest groups of less than 50. Scientists suggest even smaller numbers. Some say gatherings should be no larger than ten.

**Avoid crowds.** This is going to be a challenge for everyone. We like to socialize. Think of other ways to gather. Social media will really come into play now. Don't forget the old telephone for that vocal contact. Check on your neighbors regardless of age or abilities.

**Remember the rims.** If you have been out, you will want to wipe down your wheels and rims each time you enter your home. Have others remove their shoes by the door and wash their hands when they come into your home. Some people may use disposable gloves when pushing their chair outside of their home. Just remember not to use your mouth to remove them.

Many individuals with higher level spinal cord injury use their **mouths to assist** with activities. You will need to stop doing this when outside of your home as the mouth is a major way for COVID-19 to enter your body.

**Rely on family and friends** to help you when outside of your home. Have them shop and run errands.

**Stay positive and cautious**

All the pounding of information about COVID-19 is quite overwhelming. Today, the CDC recommends that we all self-isolate for 8 weeks. This must be done to protect ourselves, family, loved ones and society as a whole. If everyone cooperates, the transmission could go down and less time in containment may be needed.

We all must remember that an extremely large number of people will NOT get the coronavirus. That includes individuals in the community of those with spinal cord injury. Practicing exemplary hygiene and keeping distance from others increases the odds that we will be exempt from COVID-19. This is a critical time in history.