

How to Protect Yourself Against COVID-19 (Coronavirus) When Using a Wheelchair

COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

You may feel extra concern or uncertainty about COVID-19. Your health and safety are the top priorities of your health care team, today and every day.

One of the most important things you can do is to stay informed from trusted resources. Having information you need to stay healthy and knowing what to do if you think you have COVID-19 can help ease added stress.

How to Stay Healthy

As with any virus (including the flu), the best ways to avoid COVID-19 are the following.

- Wash your hands often during the day. Use soap and water and scrub for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- If you need to run errands, such as grocery shopping, stay 6 feet apart from others. If you can, use disinfectant wipes on the cart or bring hand sanitizer with you to use. Wash your hands when you return home.
- Wear a mask, (a homemade one is OK) when you're in public. Wash your hands any time you take a mask on or off.
- Stay home if you do not feel well.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Throw away used tissues and wash your hands.

- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are touched often. Use a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- If you work with a PCA (personal care attendant) service, make sure the agency has policies about staff who are or might be sick. Ask what guidelines are in place to make sure staff stays healthy. Ask that only healthy staff be sent to your home to provide care.

When To Contact Your Health Care Provider

COVID-19 symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after exposure. The common symptoms are:

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath.

Contact your health care provider right away, even for mild symptoms, if you are older or if you have severe health conditions (such as heart disease, lung disease or diabetes).

When to Call 911

Call 911 right away if you have any of the following:

- trouble breathing
- pain or pressure in your chest
- bluish lips or face
- any other symptom that concerns you.

Wheelchair Areas to Disinfect

Disinfect the parts of your wheelchair that are touched most often. (See below for examples.) Clean them after you come in contact with someone new or when you return home from being in public places. Disinfect any of these highly-touched areas that are on your wheelchair.



Cleaning Your Wheelchair

It is important to disinfect the parts of your wheelchair that are touched most often.

Clean them after you come in contact with someone new or when you return home from being in public places.

See page 2 for all of the areas of a wheelchair that should be cleaned. Remember to clean the areas that are touched most often. And don't forget the wheels!

Cleaning Other Assistive Equipment

According to Numotion™, it's important to clean other equipment or medical supplies that you or others touch often. These include:

- oxygen tanks
- backpack or purse
- medicine containers
- transfer seats
- equipment you put in your mouth or use near your face
- vehicle steering wheel and door buttons.

Remember to disinfect doorknobs, railings, mailboxes or other items on the exterior of your house that others touch.

What Else You Can Do to Prepare

- Plan what you will do if you or your direct support provider gets sick.
 - Create a contact list of family, friends, neighbors and local service agencies that can provide support in case you or your direct support provider becomes ill or unavailable.

- Plan at least two ways of communicating from home and work that can be used quickly in an emergency (such as a landline phone, cell phone, text-messaging, email). Write down this information and keep it with you.
- Have enough household items and groceries so you will be comfortable staying home for a few weeks.
 - Try to have at least a 30-day supply of over-the-counter and prescription medicines and any medical equipment or supplies that you need.
 - Check with your insurance provider or Medicare if you can get a 90-day refill on prescription medicines.

Update or Create a Health Care Directive

A health care directive lists your goals, values and preferences for your health care in case you are unable to speak. You can express what types of care you want and do not want.

You name at least one health care agent to speak on your behalf. Ask this person if they agree to be your health care agent.

The following are important steps you can take now in case you need emergency or intensive care due to COVID-19.

- Talk with your health care agent(s) about what kind of care you do and do not want. For instance:
 - Do you want CPR if your heart stops?
 - Do you want to be on a ventilator to help you breathe?

- Make sure the names and phone numbers of your health care agents are listed in your health care directive. Or write them down and keep the list with you.
- If you create a health care directive, now is not a good time to get your new document validated or witnessed. You can get your document notarized by going to [notary.com](https://www.notary.com) or [notarize.com](https://www.notarize.com) (valid for both Minnesota and Wisconsin). There is a fee for this service.
 - If you don't want to use a remote notary, you can:
 - sign and date the document
 - tell, text or email your preferences to your health care agents
 - send a picture of your newly created health care directive to your health care agents.
- Know where your health care directive, POLST (provider orders for life-sustaining treatment) or both are should you need to go to the hospital.
 - Remind your health care agents to find their copies too. If they are unable to find their copies, email them a copy or text them pictures of your copy.

Health care directive and POLST resources

If you need more information about creating a health care directive or information about a POLST, go to:

- Allina Health: allinahealth.org/acp
(You can choose a Minnesota or Wisconsin document to fill out.)
- Respecting Choices®: respectingchoices.org
- Honoring Choices: honoringchoices.org
- Minnesota Medical Association: mnmed.org/polst. (This is for POLSTs only.)

COVID-19 Resources

- Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute: allinahealth.org/couragekenny
- Allina Health at allinahealth.org/coronavirus.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)
- Minnesota Department of Health: health.state.mn.us
- Minnesota Department of Health COVID hotline at 651-201-3920 or 1-800-657-3903 (7 a.m. to 7 p.m.)