

How to Care for the Sick

Caring for sick clients first requires assessing the severity of the illness to see if they are in need of medical evaluation.

- Gather information from the client.
- Help them describe how they are feeling by asking about their symptoms and when they first noticed them.
- Try to gauge the severity of the symptoms by using a 1 - 10 scale (10 being the worst).
- Take their temperature if possible. An oral temperature of 101°F constitutes a fever.
- Common symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus) are fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

What to Do

If possible, designate a room and bathroom for clients with respiratory symptoms to separate them from others and clean/disinfect the room daily. If individual rooms are not available, consider placing the person in a large, well-ventilated room, increase spacing between beds, use sheets to create temporary barriers between beds, and arrange beds so that clients lie head-to-toe. Avoid housing the sick person in a room with people who are at increased risk of complications from COVID-19; older adults and those with asthma, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, and pregnancy.

- Provide the sick person with a mask.
- Encourage the person to lie down and rest.
- Prevent dehydration. Encourage the person to drink plenty of water, clear soup, decaffeinated tea, or juice.
- Provide a blanket if possible.
- Encourage the person to wash their hands frequently and provide them with hand sanitizer, a box of tissues and a plastic bag or lined garbage can to dispose of tissues.
- Encourage the person to cough into their elbow area or cover their mouth with tissues or paper towels when they cough or sneeze.
- Have meals brought to the sick person's room if possible.
- Check on the person every two to three hours. For clients who could be at high risk for complications from COVID-19 (those who are older or have underlying health conditions) reach out to them more regularly if possible.



If you identify any client with severe symptoms, notify your public health department and arrange for the person to receive immediate medical care. If COVID-19 is suspected, notify the transfer team and medical facility before transfer. See next page for list of severe symptoms.