



## What is Cocooning?

**This means that if you are over 70 years old – even if you’re fit and well – you should not leave your home under any circumstances, and within your home should minimise all non-essential contact with other members of the household. This is to protect those who are at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 from coming into contact with the virus.**

Cocooning is a measure to protect those over 70 years of age or those extremely medically vulnerable by minimising interaction between them and others. If you are over 70 years of age, you are strongly advised to cocoon, to reduce the chance of getting COVID-19 and follow the face-to-face distancing measures below.

This advice will be in place for 2 weeks from 27 March 2020. This period will be kept under review.

The measures are:

1. Strictly avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of COVID-19. These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough.
2. Stay home at all times and avoid any face-to-face contact. Do not go outside your home and garden. Do not have visitors to your home except for essential carers.
3. Do not attend any gatherings. This includes gatherings of friends and families in private spaces for example family homes, weddings and religious services.

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4. Do not go out for shopping and, when arranging food or medication deliveries, these should be left at the door to minimise contact.
5. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.
6. Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services.
7. Ensure you keep phones/devices charged, and have credit on your phone so that you can stay connected.

We know that stopping these activities will be difficult. You should try to identify ways of staying in touch with others and participating in your normal activities remotely from your home.

### **How can I get assistance with shopping for food and medicines?**

In the first instance, family, friends and neighbours can support you once you adhere to cocooning guidelines and they adhere to physical distancing guidelines. If these options are not available to you, County Councils across the country are coordinating community support for people who are cocooning. The support includes assistance with collecting groceries, medicines and other essential items. In some cases it also includes support to relieve social isolation.

### **Do the people getting my shopping need to take any precautions?**

People bringing your food or medicines should leave the shopping on the doorstep, ring the bell and stand at least 2 metres (6.5 feet) back while you collect it. Wash your hands after handling the shopping bags and shopping. COVID-19 can survive on hard surfaces, so wipe the outside of all canned/hard surface packed goods with a paper towel/ warm soapy water or sanitiser. Alternatively leave non-perishable foods in a safe place for 72 hours.

## **How do I keep social distance from the people I live with?**

To minimise the risk of spreading the virus within the home:

- You should stay away from other people in your home most of the time in a well-ventilated room with a window to the outside that you can open
- If you have to go into the same room with other people at home you should try to keep at least 1 metre (3 ft) and where possible 2 metres away from them
- You should clean your hands regularly and practice good respiratory etiquette
- If you can, you should use a toilet and bathroom that no one else in the house uses
- If you cannot have your own toilet and bathroom, the toilet and bathroom you use needs to be kept clean. Another tip is to consider drawing up a rota for bathing, with you using the facilities first
- Make sure you use separate towels from the other people in your house, both for drying themselves after bathing or showering and for hand-hygiene purposes
- If you share a kitchen with others, avoid using it while they are present. If you can, you should take your meals back to your room to eat. If you have one, use a dishwasher to clean and dry the family's used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using your usual washing-up liquid and warm water and dry them thoroughly. Do not share cutlery and utensils. When using your own utensils, remember to use a separate tea towel for drying these
- Clean all surfaces, such as counters, table-tops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets and toilet handles, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables, every day with a cleaning product
- When cleaning you should use your usual household products like detergents and bleach as these will be very effective at getting rid of the virus. Follow the

instructions on the manufacturer's label and check they can be used on the surface you are cleaning

- We understand that it will be difficult for some people to separate themselves from others at home. You should do your very best to follow this guidance and everyone in your household should regularly wash their hands, avoid touching their face, and clean frequently touched surfaces such as door handles and table tops

### **Should my carers take any precautions?**

Carers should take precautions to maintain good hygiene. They should only provide care that is essential, such as help with washing, dressing or feeding. If you receive regular health or social care from an organisation, either through your local authority or paid for by yourself, inform your care providers that you are cocooning and agree a plan for continuing your care.

If you receive essential care from friends or family members, speak to your carers about extra precautions they can take to keep you safe. Speak to your carers about backup plans for your care in case your main carer is unwell and needs to self-isolate. Carers should:

- Wash their hands on arrival and often, especially before and after being in contact with you. Hand washing means using soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using hand sanitiser.
- Avoid touching their face
- Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue or their sleeve (not hands) when coughing or sneezing
- Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash their hands afterwards
- Not visit or provide care if they are unwell and make alternative arrangements for your care

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- Provide information on who you should call if you feel unwell, write out the phone number of your GP and GP out-of-hours service and leave these prominently displayed

### **Can I go for a walk?**

You should not go for walk outside your home. You are encouraged to stay mobile within your home by getting up and moving around as much as possible. If you have a garden or backyard you can go out and get some fresh air but please keep away from other people, including neighbours. Keeping a distance of 2 metres (or 6.5 feet) from other people is recommended.

### **I am fit and well, what if I just go for a short walk?**

You should not leave your home for any reason. Reducing your risk by staying home is the best protection from COVID-19. You are encouraged to stay mobile and get up and about within the home only or in your garden.

### **Can I go out to my garden or balcony?**

Yes. You need to stay at your own home, but if you have an outside area such as a balcony or garden you can go outside for fresh air, but while keeping at least 2 metres (6.5 feet) from other people, including neighbours.

### **Does that mean you can't see anyone?**

Essentially yes. To improve Ireland's chances of managing the virus, everyone must stay at least 2 metres (6.5 feet) away from others. To keep those over 70 safe, you should avoid any face to face contact with others until otherwise advised by the HSE. Try to stay in touch with those around you over the phone or online. Let people know how you would like to stay in touch and build that into your routine. This is also important in looking after your mental wellbeing and you may find it helpful to talk to them about how you are feeling, if you want to.

### **I have a hospital/GP appointment to go to, can I go out for that?**

Everyone is advised to access medical assistance remotely, wherever possible. However, if you have a scheduled hospital or other medical appointment during this period, talk to your GP or specialist to ensure you continue to receive the care you need and determine which of these are absolutely essential. It is possible that your hospital may need to cancel or postpone some clinics and appointments. You should contact your hospital or clinic to confirm appointments.

### **I will get bored, what am I meant to do?**

Staying at home or self-isolation can be boring or frustrating. It may affect your mood and feelings. You may feel low, worried or have problems sleeping. Try to look after your mental health by staying active and maintaining a routine. You may find it helps to stay in touch with friends or relatives by phone or on social media.

This could be a good time to spend time doing things you enjoy – this might include reading, cooking, other indoor hobbies or listening to favourite radio programmes or watching TV. Try spending time with the windows open to let in the fresh air, arranging space to sit and see a nice view (if possible) and get some natural sunlight. Keep yourself mobile by getting up and moving around as much as possible. If you have a garden, backyard or balcony, go out and get some fresh air. But try to keep more than 2 metres away from other people. Your mental health will also be supported by eating healthy, well-balanced meals, drinking enough water, exercising regularly, and trying to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs.

ALONE is providing a telephone support line, seven days a week from 8am – 8pm, for all older people and their families to contact if they would like any advice, reassurance or additional support: **0818 222 024**.