

Info-sheet 6

COVID-19 & Disability

People with intellectual disabilities (ID) are vulnerable to adverse outcomes associated with COVID-19. Many who live at home with ageing parent carers, who themselves are a high-risk group when it comes to COVID-19.

People with ID may not understand about visiting restrictions which can increase their sense of social isolation. There's also the risk that masks and protective clothing might be alarming to people with intellectual disabilities, especially if they aren't as resilient to changes.

Many adults rely daily on the assistance of others for their basic needs to be met. This means social distancing could decrease their sources of basic care, like food, transportation, assistance with hygiene, or critical emotional support.

People with intellectual disabilities are more likely to have a mental health conditions like anxiety and depression than the general population.

For caregivers of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) this time can also be challenging. They need to take care of themselves.

Caregivers should explain COVID-19 to someone with ID and Developmental Disabilities (DD). Caregivers must take a

Advice for Care Givers

Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus.

Protect yourself.

Limit contact.

Do not share personal items with the ill person.

Wear disposable gloves when touching the ill person, their environment and soiled items or surfaces

Do not re-use face masks or gloves.

At least once daily clean and disinfect surfaces that people touch often, such as toilets, laundry containers, bedside tables, doorknobs, phones and television remotes.

calm and matter-of-fact approach to explain what COVID-19 is and how to prevent it.

How to Explain COVID-19 to a loved one with ID/DD

1. Find a quiet space to speak to the person.
2. Speak in a matter-of-fact but calm voice. Make sure that your body language shows that you are also relaxed.
3. Ask the person if they have heard about COVID-19 or coronavirus.
4. Use simple terms to describe COVID-19. Explain that people who get the virus might have a cough, fever, and shortness of breath and feel very sick.
5. Reassure the person of their safety and talk about steps of protection.
6. Talk about a few ways to keep safe. Keep the list simple and direct.
7. Use “we” phrases. For example, “In order to try our best we must wash our hands frequently and use hand sanitizer.”
8. Provide examples of what to do, not what not to do.
9. Make it clear that staying at home is a way to keep ourselves and others healthy.



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If approved hard surface disinfectants are not available, a diluted bleach solution can be prepared by following the instructions on the label, or in a ratio of:

5 millilitres (mL) of (5%) bleach per 250 mL of water

OR

20 mL of (5%) bleach per litre of water