COVID-19 Recommendations for High Risk Groups

- Early information suggests persons older than 60 years are at higher risk of developing severe illness and even dying from COVID-19. This risk increases with age.
- Persons who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, lung disease or diabetes are also at higher risk for more serious illness from COVID-19.

Long-Term Care Facilities

- Facilities should implement (and build upon, if necessary) their existing infection control plans used to control respiratory illnesses.
- Those infection control plans should address:
    - Identifying lead person for infection control.
    - Surveillance to detect respiratory illness and what to do if there's a suspected case of COVID-19 in a resident or staff member.
    - Use of standard, droplet, and contact precautions to minimize the risk of transmission to and from direct care staff.
    - Visitor screening procedures.
    - Cohorting symptomatic residents.
    - Staff, resident, and visitor education about COVID-19.
    - Signs to remind about:
        - Hand washing
        - Respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette
          www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/resphygiene.htm
        - COVID-19 information
        - Not visiting if sick
    - Sick leave policies for employees.
    - Environmental cleaning.
- Monitor federal, state and local public health sources to understand COVID-19 activity in your community
    - Consult with public health authorities if community transmission occurs
- More resources online at:
    - www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/prevent-spread-in-long-term-care-facilities.html

- - *Washington Dept. of Health* - Recommendations for Long Term Care Facilities During COVID-19 Outbreak
    www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/LongTermCareFacilities

Senior and disability support agencies

- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home and send sick employees home immediately.
- Emphasize hand washing and respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette. Make sure everyone has access to these supplies.
- Perform routine environmental cleaning based on CDC's guidance for businesses:
  www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html
- Assist seniors, who have been recommended to stay home during community transmission, in accessing food and supplies, medications and other medical necessities, and social connections. Arrange welfare checks if needed.
- More information on the Washington Department of Health's Senior Center Administrator and Employee Resources and Recommendations webpage at
  www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/SeniorCenterRecommendationsandResources

Seniors and individuals with underlying medical conditions and their caregivers

- Take everyday precautions to prevent respiratory illness:
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing or having been in a public place.
  - Use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and face.
  - Avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places. Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand or finger if you must touch something.
  - Regularly clean and disinfect your home.
- Have supplies on hand including prescription and over-the-counter medications, other medical necessities, groceries, and other household items so you'll be prepared to stay at home for a prolonged period of time.
- Reducing exposure is especially important for people at higher risk of complications.
  - Stay home as much as possible. Consider ways of getting food brought to your house through family, social, or commercial networks.
  - If you do go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact, and wash your hands often.
  - Avoid crowds. Your risk of exposure may increase in crowded, closed-in setting with little air circulation.
- Have a plan in case you get sick:
  - Consult with your health care provider about monitoring your health for symptoms of COVID-19.

- o Stay in touch with others by phone or email. You may need to ask for help from family, friends, neighbors, community health workers or others.
  - o Identify who can provide you with care if your caregiver gets sick.
- Watch for symptoms and emergency warning signs:
  - o Symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you feel like you're developing symptoms, call your doctor.
  - o Some emergency warning signs include difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to rouse, bluish lips or face. This is not an all-inclusive list; immediately consult with your medical provider or seek emergency care for any symptom that is severe or concerning.
- What to do if you become sick:
  - o Stay home except to seek medical care.
  - o Call your health care provider before you seek care and let them know about your symptoms and any COVID-19 risk factors you have (e.g., travel, contact with a known case).
  - o If you're not sick enough to be hospitalized, you may be able to recover at home. Follow CDC instructions for how to take care of yourself at home: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html.
  - o Know when to get emergency help. Get medical attention immediately if you have any of the emergency warning signs (see above).
- More resources online at:
  - o *CDC* - People at Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19 www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html
  - o *Washington Dept. of Health* - Guidance for Persons Who are at Higher Risk for Serious Illness www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/HigherRiskforSeriousIllness.
  - o *Administration for Community Living* – Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) https://acl.gov/COVID-19

How others can support older adults and anyone with underlying medical conditions

- Community preparedness planning efforts should include older adults, people with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, and the organizations and caregivers that support them.
- Family and caregivers:
  - o Know what medications the individual is taking and see if you can help them have extra on hand.
  - o Monitor food and other needed medical supplies (oxygen, dialysis, incontinence, wound care).
  - o Stock up on non-perishable food items to have on hand to minimize trips to stores.
  - o Monitor the situation nationally and in your community.
- Learn more about how to protect yourself and your community at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/.