Managing Possible or Confirmed COVID-19 at Home/in a Dorm
This guideline is written for ages 14 and older
SUNY Plattsburgh Student Health & Counseling Center

Introduction:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a website titled *What to Do If You Are Sick, for those with* possible or confirmed COVID-19. This site reviews how to isolate and when to seek medical attention. It provides minimal advice for self-care at home or in a dorm.

Simple early measures taken at home or in a dorm will make you more comfortable and can help most bronchial infections. If you can keep your body and lungs healthier, there is the possibility it may help you mount a stronger challenge to this virus. These measures have no side effects, so there is no downside to following them.

When to seek emergency medical attention:

- Trouble breathing or significant shortness of breath on exertion
- Severe, persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face (can indicate low oxygen levels in your blood)

Patient Protocol:

1. Rest and stay in quarantine/isolation as instructed.
2. Stay hydrated. Drink six to eight glasses fluids daily: juice, water, soups. Avoid alcohol. Fluids keep you healthier and thin your pulmonary secretions. Your urine should be colorless or a very light yellow. If the urine is becoming darker, you are getting dehydrated.
3. Do not smoke or vape. Any smoke is an irritant, including cannabis.
4. Deep breathing exercises during the day. When you are ill and breathing with shallow breaths, some lung tissue can collapse (atelectasis). This makes you more prone to pneumonia. A London hospital doctor, Dr. Sarfaraz Munshi, describes a breathing technique that could have significant preventive value. He urges patients to begin practicing the breathing technique at the start of your infection. His video [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwLzAdriec0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwLzAdriec0) is backed up by the chief medical officer of the American Lung Association.

Dizziness can occur so do this safely sitting.

a. Take five deep breaths in and each time hold the breath for 5 seconds.
b. On the sixth deep breath, you will take it in and do a big cough, covering your mouth. This is one cycle.
c. Now repeat a second cycle.
d. Then lay on your stomach on the bed with a pillow under your chest taking slightly deeper than normal breaths for the next 10 minutes. Most of your lung tissue is towards your back so laying in the prone position helps keep the smaller airways open.
e. Repeat this several times a day.

Purpose of this technique: The initial deep breaths help all the airways to open up. You want any mucus to dislodge and be removed by the big
cough at the end of the sixth breath.

5. Simple leg exercises can be helpful. When you are ill and weak and not moving too much, the leg muscles get very weak. Two exercises to keep your legs stronger and improve circulation are:
   a) Lying flat on your back on the bed, push a knee down against the bed. This causes the thigh muscle (quadriceps) to contract. Hold the contraction for 10 seconds. Do five to 10 repetitions and repeat with the other leg. Do this 3-4 times daily.
   b) Flex your feet towards and away from you 10-20 times. Do this three to four times daily or anytime you think of it.

6. Steam inhalations may be helpful to help healing and loosen mucus in the upper and lower airways (even though there are no controlled studies that prove this). Steam three times daily for 10-15 minutes each time. This recommendation is for patients who are 14 years and older. Do not use boiling water from a stove or microwave.

Ways to get steam:
   • A facial steamer
   • You can sit at the sink and put on the hot water. Put a towel over your head to capture the steam.
   • You can sit in the bathroom with the hot shower on. You do not want to stand for a long time in a hot shower when you are ill with fever, because blood can pool in your legs and you can get faint
   • Gargles are very helpful if your throat is sore. Put a pinch of salt in a glass of warm (not hot) water. Gargle periodically during the day. Steaming will also help your sore throat and can replace gargling.
   • Humidification — A small (1 to 1.5 gallon) steam vaporizer or cool mist humidifier is very helpful when the heating systems are on and the air is very dry. Air conditioning can also cause dryness in the room. Saline nasal spray — use this at any time to help humidify the nose

For fever, headache, and muscle ache:

Currently, acetaminophen (Tylenol) is the preferred medication to reduce COVID-related fever. Acetaminophen comes in 325 mg and 500 mg tabs; take as directed and do not exceed 3,000 mg in a 24 hour period.

If a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) such as ibuprofen (also known as Motrin & Advil) is needed to relieve symptoms, or you are already using ibuprofen to relieve your symptoms, use the lowest effective dose.