

## Resources for staying connected and increasing your well-being during lockdown



The good Samaritan window at Holy Trinity

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### Well-being resources (summary)

If you're caring for an older person, or are isolated, or struggling due to lockdown restrictions, some of these links may help you with ideas that may keep you and others connected and well

<https://www.health.gov.au/node/18602/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-older-people-and-carers>

<https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/i-am-supporting-others/older-people/supporting-older-people-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic.html>

<https://www.melbourneanglican.org.au/covid-well-being/>

<https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/mental-wellbeing-covid-19>

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### Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice for older people and carers

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Looking after your mental health and wellbeing from home (Beyond Blue)

According to Dr Steve Ellen, a psychiatrist and co-author of *Mental: Everything you Never Knew you Need to Know About Mental Health*, the current need to self-distance or self-isolate may heighten feelings of loneliness, fear, stress, anxiety and depression. To cope during this difficult time, he recommends doing the following:

Stay connected with loved ones – use your phone, social media and apps such as Skype, FaceTime and WhatsApp to stay in touch with family and friends. Touch base with someone every single day.

Do things you enjoy – read that pile of books and watch those TV shows you missed. If you're lucky enough to have a garden, make the most of it. Why not try a new pastime that you can do at home or online? Painting and listening to music are both great ways of relaxing and practising mindfulness. If you enjoy DIY, now's a good time to knuckle down and get jobs done.

Stay healthy – focus on eating well and getting enough exercise and good-quality sleep. Take the time to cook from fresh, do online yoga or aerobics, meditate and focus on maintaining good sleep habits. Keeping up healthy routines will help both your physical and mental health.

Dodge the panic – try to limit your media and online exposure. Seek advice from credible sources only and don't consume news all day long.

Reach out -if you are finding that you are struggling, don't hesitate to reach out. If you need assistance, please visit the dedicated Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service. Trained mental health professionals are available to talk to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, via phone.

<https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/managing-my-daily-life/coping-with-isolation-and-being-at-home/keeping-loneliness-at-bay-while-staying-at-home.html>

## **Supporting older people during the coronavirus pandemic**

Social connection and practical support are always important for the wellbeing of older people, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, they are more important than ever.

Older people make up a significant proportion of Australia's population. And as well as being at greater risk of serious illness if they have COVID-19, some are at increased risk of becoming isolated and vulnerable while physical distancing restrictions continue.

For those who live alone, are on a fixed income, can no longer get around independently, or have undiagnosed or poorly managed mental health conditions, regular and reliable support is vital.

Here, we look at some of the ways you can support older people, from family to friends, colleagues to neighbours.

### **Provide social and practical support**

It's important to check in with the older people in your life in a way – and frequency – that they are most comfortable with, whether that's a phone call, a text, an email, a note at their door or a chat (from an appropriate distance) over the fence.

The key is to let them know they are in your thoughts, that you always have time for a chat and that they can ask if they need anything.

In terms of practical support, a good start is to ask and discuss with them how they would like you to help. This may be by shopping for food and other essentials they need or helping them set up a weekly delivery of groceries.

Also, provided you follow good food safety practices, consider offering to extra food when making meals for yourself and leaving it at their front door at a time that suits them.

When making an offer to help, make sure to do so in a way that acknowledges their independence and shows respect for their experience and decision-making. Value the wisdom they have likely gained through times of significant stress or hardship and call on that wisdom when looking for solutions to a problem, for they may have ideas that you haven't considered.

### **Help them stay connected**

Maintaining social connection and staying in touch is critical to our wellbeing.

For some older people, understanding the technology that allows them to do so can be a challenge in itself.

The Be Connected website offers helpful resources designed to help older Australians develop digital and online skills, while this page provides a range of useful tips for older people around staying safe online.

Think about sending them (trusted) links to things they may enjoy, such as online crosswords and puzzles, music, theatre or sport recordings, or virtual tours of museums and other popular tourist destinations.

Keeping entertained and connected will help older adults manage the frustration they may be feeling as a result of losing their normal routine, while chatting with family and friends will help lower the risk of them feeling low and lonely.

Share good-quality, reliable and up-to-date information

Now is an uncertain and unsettling time, and accessing important, reliable, and current information can provide perspective and help older adults feel more in control of their situation.

### **In terms of the help that is available to them:**

COTA for older Australians has plenty of helpful advice, including current information about visiting loved ones in aged care facilities. The Australian Government's Department of Health has a handy information sheet for older people, their family, and friends about how to stay protected from the spread of coronavirus. The My Aged Care website has a whole section offering information and support for older people and their family during the coronavirus pandemic. Beyond Blue has put together a range of advice for older people on how to manage feelings of anxiety and depression. Head to Health also have helpful advice on how to maintain good mental health during COVID-19. Aged and Community Services Australia has collated a range of resources and information for aged care providers relating to coronavirus and how this can be managed within aged care organisations.

Assist with healthcare needs

If the older people you're supporting needs help with getting medicines, you could make the trip to the chemist yourself, or help them arrange for the pharmacy to deliver them.

You can download information about the home medicines service here. This service provides a free, contactless monthly delivery of prescription medication for older and vulnerable Australians.

When it comes to medical appointments, all Australians now have greatly improved access to bulk-billed telehealth services – meaning consultations will take place over the phone, or via video chat. If they need help with this, encourage them to talk with their GP about how they can set these up.

Should the older person urgently need an in-person evaluation, phone ahead for them, report symptoms and ask for instructions regarding next steps.

### **A range of support options**

There's been a lot of change recently, and it's natural for people to be feeling lonely, overwhelmed or even completely out of their depth. If it seems someone you know or support is unsure about how to cope, or who to turn to, we encourage you to download and print this handy PDF flyer for them. It lists some of the resources and services available to help older people manage their mental health during these challenging times.

<https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/i-am-supporting-others/older-people/supporting-older-people-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic.html>