



COVID-19 GUIDANCE

Making a plan for people with disabilities and older people

This guide is for older people and people with disabilities, and those who care for them. It's also for those who want to collaborate better with people with disabilities and older people, and to make sure they are included. It gives some background about people's vulnerabilities and capabilities, as well as highlighting some risks and considering how we can create plans to mitigate them.

We know that people with disabilities and older people are more at risk from Covid-19 but it's important to remember:

- People are the experts of their situation. Always seek to listen and learn, remembering the adage 'nothing about us without us'.
- Disability is mostly caused by barriers in society, not by specific physical, intellectual or emotional impairments. Physical barriers might be very obvious: for example, steps into a building and no ramp. But often it is people's attitudes that are the problem, and many people with disabilities face misunderstanding and discrimination on a daily basis.
- People with disabilities and older people are very diverse and each faces unique barriers and has their own capabilities. Many disabilities are hidden. It's important to treat each person with respect and dignity.
- People with disabilities and older people have capacity to respond. They have an important perspective and often a network of relationships in the wider community which, when used, can lead to better protection of vulnerable people and groups.
- People with disabilities and older people have a right to access information and essential services just like anyone else.
- It is estimated that one in eight people are disabled globally; in low-income contexts, the statistic is one in five. A pandemic such as Covid-19 can exacerbate existing disabilities and may create new ones.

Potential risks

While not all of these will apply to each person, it is important to be mindful of the following risks facing older people and those with disability:

- They are at greater risk of contracting Covid-19. They are likely to face more barriers to taking preventive measures and accessing public health information and health facilities.
- Physical distancing is more difficult. Older people and people with disabilities may have people whom they rely on for support and to meet essential needs.
- Existing barriers that exist in health facilities (e.g overstretched facilities, lack of hygiene equipment) are made worse as they come under increased pressure during Covid-19.
- Relevant information on Covid-19 is not always accessible to people with disabilities and older people.
- Covid-19 can exacerbate pre-existing health issues (see box below).
- They face higher risks if their vulnerability is increased by other risk and protection factors (eg gender, race). For example, people with a disability are at higher risk of gender-based violence.

Underlying health factors that increase risk during Covid-19 include:

- Chronic lung disease or moderate-to-severe asthma
- Serious heart conditions
- Being overweight
- Underlying medical conditions (e.g. heart and/or lung conditions)
- Lower immunity associated with eg cancer treatment, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immunodeficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, or smoking

In your context there may be other factors too. Do check your local and national health information. Medical knowledge about Covid-19 is increasing all the time so seek out up-to-date, new information where possible.

Taking action to mitigate risk

It's important not just to be aware of risks but also to plan how to reduce them. Making a plan can help to relieve stress and anxiety for vulnerable people and their carers.

- How can you best follow basic protection measures (eg handwashing)?
- Who is in your support network? What would happen if someone becomes unwell?
- What are the essential supplies (eg food and medication) you need? Stock up on these and find alternative sources if need be.
- Who relies on you and what will they do if you fall sick?
- How will you look after your mental health?
- How will you keep connected to people and news remotely?
- Who else in your community do you know who might need support? Can you support them?
- Create an emergency contact list.
- Make a list of the local organisations that might be able to support you.

<p style="text-align: center;">People</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the people you rely on? • Who relies on you? 	<p style="text-align: center;">Health</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you keep safe and follow recommended hygiene practices and physical distancing? • What gives you joy?
<p style="text-align: center;">Organisations</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which organisations are nearby and offering help? 	<p style="text-align: center;">Essentials</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What items do you need, and where can you get them from?

Then share this list with others and ask what information might be missing.

Make a list of next steps.

Then fill in this table:


Everyday actions	Weekly actions	Emergency actions
<p><i>(Include things that also bring you joy and hope!)</i></p>		






Make this plan available to those in your support network. Get their feedback and access and update weekly.

Always be careful not to share sensitive and personal information about yourself or those in your household with others.

Extra information for organisations seeking to include people with disabilities.

**Disability Inclusive
Community Action:
Covid-19 Matrix**



 COMPASSION Promote and protect wellbeing Listen. Encourage hope, safety and calmness Be considerate (self-protection, social distancing)	 COMMUNICATION Share your contact details and stay connected Ensure messages are accessible to all Ensure messages are clear and truthful	 NETWORKS Ensure Organizations of Persons with Disabilities play a key role in awareness raising Coordinate with other community groups Support and promote exchange of good practices	 PARTICIPATION Be part of community conversations Ensure persons with disabilities contribute to the outbreak response Ensure community based organizations lead on inclusive communication	 ACCESS Ensure accessible and alternative communication is available to all Secure access to necessities (water, food, medicine etc.) Ensure access to services and financial support
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Further reading

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [People who are at higher risk for severe illness](#)

Tearfund: [Bible study on disability](#)

World Health Organization: [Disability considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak](#)

World Health Organization: [Mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak](#)

Christian Blind Mission: [Disability-inclusive community action Covid-19 matrix](#)

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