



Arbetsgruppen för råd om covid-19 vid trångboddhet

A working group consisting of specialists in occupational and environmental medicine, together with professionals with longstanding experience from health care and health information in crowded and multicultural areas in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö, has prepared advice on the prevention of covid-19 in crowded living conditions. The advice is based on information from the Public Health Agency of Sweden and WHO, and has been fact-checked by a specialist in infectious diseases.

Contents

Contents.....	2
1. General information.....	3
What is covid-19?.....	3
Protect yourself and others from infection	3
Advice for those working away from home.....	3
Advice for children and teenagers	3
Advice for children and teenagers concerning physical exercise and sports	4
Advice for relatives, friends and neighbors of elderly living in their own apartments	4
2. Advice for those who live in overcrowded conditions.....	5
Advice concerning cooking and eating	5
Advice for those who are above 70 years and live together with children and grandchildren.....	5
3. Advice when suspecting covid-19 illness	6
How do you know if you are infected with covid-19?	6
What should you do if you suspect you are infected with covid-19?.....	6
Advice for persons tending to someone with suspected covid-19 in the home	7
Information about the use of face masks indoors when someone in the home is suspected of having covid-19	7

1. General information

What is covid-19?

Covid-19 is a viral infection caused by a coronavirus which never has existed in humans before. It is now spreading rapidly across the world as nobody is immune to the infection.

The virus is transmitted by close contact between humans, especially when coughing or sneezing. When someone coughs or sneezes tiny droplets with virus inside are released into the air. A person who inhales or in other way gets such a droplet into the mouth, nose or eye can then be infected.

That is why you can be infected also from touching surfaces, objects or other persons. For example, if you shake someone's hand and that person somehow has a droplet with virus on their hand, then you might become infected if you later touch your eye, nose or mouth. This is why you should wash your hands frequently and avoid touching your face.

Protect yourself and others from infection

- **Wash your hands frequently using soap and water, for at least 20 seconds.**
 - Always wash your hands when you get home and get to work. Wash your hands before eating, before cooking and after going to the toilet.
 - Alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be an alternative if you do not have the possibility to wash your hands. Still, soap and water is the best alternative.
 - Gloves only give a false sense of safety. Wash your hands instead!
- **Cough and sneeze in your elbow.**
- Use disposable paper tissue and throw it away after each use. Do not use a textile handkerchief when blowing your nose.
- **Try to keep a distance to other people.**
 - Whenever possible, keep a distance to other persons in public transports, when shopping, and in other activities where you might meet many persons.
- **Fresh air at home is good for you**
 - Open the windows and ventilate regularly. Avoid smoking and the use of hookah indoors.

Advice for those working away from home

- Find out if any advice has been given in order to reduce transmission at your workplace.
- If you use public transportation: Try to keep a distance to fellow travelers.
- When you get home from work: Wash your hands in soap and water as soon as you get home.
- Put your work clothes away. Do not use them in your home.

Advice for children and teenagers

Children and teenagers who get infected by covid-19 usually only have mild symptoms like a cold with fever and cough, and recover within a few days. The same goes for most adults. Sometimes persons do not have any symptoms at all, but can still infect other people.

This is why it is important to protect persons above 70 years and people who already have other diseases. They can get very ill from the virus. Everyone can help by taking some simple measures.

- Wash your hands with soap and water when you get home. This will kill viruses that may be on your hands.

- Avoid bringing friends over if you have elderly people living with you.
- You show respect for and care of the elderly by keeping distance to them, both indoors and outdoors.
- You should stay at home even if you just have slight symptoms of a cold. Cough and sneeze in your elbow pit. Wash your hands with soap and water frequently.
- It is especially important that you keep your distance to elderly people who live in your home if you feel even a little ill.

For teenagers:

- Keep up to date with trusted sources of information (such as Folkhälsomyndigheten and Krisinformation about what is happening in your region or town). Share reliable information to your family and friends. Do not contribute to spreading false rumors.
- Help those who cannot call health care or other authorities. You probably already do this, but right now it is even more important.
- The advice about avoiding large crowds applies to children and teenagers as well. It applies both outdoors and indoors. Try to keep 2 meter distance to the next person.
- Remember that there are still teachers and counselors at the schools. You can always contact them if you need to talk to someone.

Advice for children and teenagers concerning physical exercise and sports

It is important to remain physically active. If you do exercise in a club your club has probably already decided how to best continue exercising in a good way to minimize risk of disease transmission. If not, ask your leader for advice.

- Many clubs have changed from indoor to outdoor exercise. That decreases the risk of transmission
- Change clothes at home, not in dressing rooms.
- Do not share water bottles or drink directly from the tap at the training facilities.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water immediately when you get home, even if you do not take a shower.

Advice for relatives, friends and neighbors of elderly living in their own apartments

The advice about isolation can lead to loneliness and other difficulties for elderly persons who live in their own apartment. As a relative, friend or neighbor you can do much to improve their situation.

- Keep in contact by phone or other means, do not visit them in their home.
- Do not invite them to your own home. You have to show that you care about them in other ways.
- Offer your help to shop food and medicines for them, or cook food and leave by their door.
- You can go for a walk together, but keep a distance while walking.
- Help giving them correct information about covid-19.
- If the elderly person gets ill and needs help: contact the primary health care center (Vårdcentral) or call 1177.

2. Advice for those who live in overcrowded conditions

Advice concerning cooking and eating

The virus is not transmitted by food. *Cook your food as usual. Any virus will be killed when the food is cooked or fried. If any virus gets into the stomach, it will die from the acid.*

- Always wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before cooking.
- Wash fruit and vegetables in water. Do not use disinfectants.
- Do not share cutlery, plates or glasses with each other during dinner.
- Do the dishes as usual, use regular washing-up liquid.

A dinner is supposed to be something which unites the family, and everyone is welcome, especially during festivities. Unfortunately, this cannot be so this year.

- If adults or older children have even a minor cough, fever, runny nose or sore throat they should avoid eating together with other family members, and keep a distance.
- Try to gather around meals only with those who live in the same apartment, nobody else. Right now is not the time for common festive meals with family, neighbors and friends. Avoiding this means caring for those that mean much to you.
- Hookah (nargile, water-pipe) smoking is something which currently should be avoided. There is a risk of virus transmitting through the shared mouthpiece, hose and other parts of the pipe, and it is difficult to clean completely.

Advice for those who are above 70 years and live together with children and grandchildren

Persons aged 70 years and older, and those with different kinds of underlying health conditions needs to take extra care to protect themselves against getting infected. For those who live in a large family with both children and grown-ups in a small apartment, or who have much contact with their neighbors and relatives this is not so easy. There is however some advice to give:

- Try to avoid meeting new people who do not live in your home.
The best is if other people do not visit indoors. If children or adults who do not live in the home nevertheless visit, it is good if you can stay in a separate room. The door can be open. If it is not possible to go to another room, keep as far away as possible from the visitor. Wash your hands with soap and water when the visitor has left.
- Try to get your own space in the apartment, even if it is only a chair in a corner where only you are allowed to use. Then it is easier for you to keep a distance to others living in the same home.
- It is especially important to keep a distance if anyone in the family starts having a runny nose, fever, or sore throat.
- Fresh air is good for you
Don't hesitate to go for a walk, or have a chat outside. Remember to keep at least 2 meters distance to the next person. Always wash your hands with soap and water when you get back home.
Open a window and ventilate your apartment frequently.

- All smoking of waterpipe or other tobacco inside should be avoided.
- Limit contacts with people who do not live in your home
 - Do not go shopping.
 - Do not visit other people or go to places where people gather.
 - Avoid using public transportation if possible.

3. Advice when suspecting covid-19 illness

How do you know if you are infected with covid-19?

Covid-19 is a viral disease that is transmitted at close contact between people, especially when sneezing and coughing.

Covid-19 resembles both influenza and a common cold. You can get fever, cough, runny nose, and sore throat, and also reduced taste and smell, general pain in muscles and joints, nausea and slight diarrhea.

The majority of people who are infected only get mild symptoms, and recover after approximately two weeks. Others can be infected without experiencing any symptoms. Some people could get severe breathing difficulties because of pneumonia. Those 70 years old and older, or with underlying health conditions are at higher risk for severe disease. Therefore it is important that everyone contributes to reducing the risk of transmission.

What should you do if you suspect you are infected with covid-19?

Common colds are common, and at some time of the year there is also influenza. All runny noses and coughs are not covid-19, but to be on the safe side you should be very careful in order not to transmit the disease to other people.

- If you feel ill with symptoms such as a runny nose, cough or fever you should try to avoid meeting other people. Do not go to the job, school or nursery school. This applies also if you only feel slightly ill.
- Try to keep to yourself in your home. Avoid being close to people that are 70 years or older, and those that have any underlying health conditions.
- Wash your hands frequently using soap and water. Do not share towels with other persons in the home.
- Cough in your elbow. Use paper tissue that you throw away after sneezing and blowing your nose.
- If you get a fever you can use regular antipyretic drugs. Never borrow antibiotics from someone else. Antibiotics do not help against viral infections.
- If you feel worse, get a high fever and have a severe cough, or have difficulties breathing even at rest you need to seek care. If you feel uncertain if and where you should seek care, you can call your healthcare center or 1177 for advice.
- If possible, call the health care center before going there.
- If the health care center is closed and you suddenly feel worse and get breathing difficulties you can go directly to the emergency department at the hospital. If you get severely ill you should call 112.

Advice for persons tending to someone with suspected covid-19 in the home

- If someone is ill it is very important to try to limit the contact with the rest of the family as much as possible.
- Ideally, the ill person should have his own room. When this is not possible, you can try to create a separate space in the home, where others are not allowed.
- It is important to let fresh air into the home, especially to the room in which the ill person is staying.
- It is also important to be careful when cleaning toilets and bathrooms when someone is ill. You can use a regular detergent.
- Those who have a runny nose or cough should use paper tissues that can be disposed of in a bin. The ill person should wash his or her hands with soap and water regularly.
- The person tending to the ill person should always wash his or her hands with soap and water after each contact with the ill person.

Information about the use of face masks indoors when someone in the home is suspected of having covid-19

Swedish authorities do not currently advice on the use of face masks. However, there are such recommendations in many other countries.

- A face mask can never replace washing hands with soap and water and keeping appropriate distance. But a face mask can reduce spread of droplets when coughing or sneezing.
- The World Health Organization, WHO, recommend that grown-ups and older children who are ill use a face mask to reduce the spread of small droplets released from mouth or nose when talking, coughing and sneezing ^{1 2}.
- WHO also recommends that the person tending to the ill person uses a face mask.
- If a face mask is used it is important to use it properly. You should never touch a face mask when wearing it. It is also important to remove it carefully to avoid touching front or back, and wash your hands afterwards.
- Face masks shall be changed when they become wet, and they should be changed several times a day.
- Face masks made of fabric can be washed in hot water with regular detergent.

Respiratory masks with filter should only be used by health care workers. Home-made masks are not as effective, but can nevertheless reduce droplet transmission. There are many useful instructions and films on youtube on how to make a simple mask using fabric. Remember that a mask can never replace washing hands with soap and water regularly and keeping a distance.

1 [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)-outbreak](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak)

2 [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/home-care-for-patients-with-suspected-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-presenting-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/home-care-for-patients-with-suspected-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-presenting-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts)