

Guidance on self-isolation for non-hospitalised COVID-19 infected persons

Limitation on movement and contact with other persons

Isolation methods are focused on the known routes of infections transmission. The use of single-room isolation alongside transmission-based precautions forms the basis of infection prevention. (Gammon & Hunt, 2018)

- COVID-19 infected person should stay in a dedicated well-ventilated (Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (c), 2020) room with adjoining bathroom and the door should be kept close at all times (Broussard & Kahwaji, 2020)
- COVID-19 infected person should stay (Gammon & Hunt, 2018) in the room and not leave the room while in self-isolation
 - Furniture in the room must be washable or be able to be disinfected (Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (c), 2020)
 - Remove unnecessary furniture and equipment from the room before COVID-19 infected person enters the room
 - If a healthy person shared/used the room before the time, all personal belongings should be removed from the room (e.g. clothes, toothbrush) before COVID-19 infected person enters the room
 - Curtains in the room must be washable at a high temperature (70°C) – if not replace it with something suitable (e.g. bed sheets)
- A dedicated household member (caregiver) who is in good health should be allocated to take care of a COVID-19 infected person (Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (c), 2020; World Health Organisation (c), 2020), these care activities could be:
 - Providing food and beverages or anything that the infected person need
 - Assisting the infected person with personal hygiene activities
 - Washing of clothes, towels, bedlinen
 - Cleaning of the environment (e.g. room, bathroom and furniture)
 - Removal of general waste
- The COVID-19 infected person should not receive any visitors even from other household members until the COVID-19 infected person has completely recovered and has no signs or symptoms of COVID-19 (National Institute for communicable diseases, 2020; Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (c), 2020; Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (b), 2020)

It is not always possible to provide a COVID-19 infected person with a dedicated room and/or bathroom, the following measurements could then be implemented to reduce exposure to the transmission of COVID-19 pathogens:

- If possible, a social distance of 1-2 meters should be maintained (World Health Organisation (c), 2020; Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (c), 2020) and all persons should wear masks (Broussard & Kahwaji, 2020)
- COVID-19 infected person's movement in the house should be limited and household members should not be in the same room at the same time as COVID-19 infected person (Gammon & Hunt, 2018)
- The COVID-19 infected person should minimise the time spent in shared spaces such as the bathroom (Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (c), 2020)
- In shared spaces, surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected after a COVID-19 infected person has used the room or touched the surface and should not be touched by the COVID-19 infected person after it has been cleaned and disinfected (Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (c), 2020) e.g. the bathroom, toilet, door handles and light switches

Personal hygiene

Washing hands for 40-60 seconds reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 pathogens (Broussard & Kahwaji, 2020) ⁵ and using a 70% alcohol-based hand sanitiser/rub deactivate COVID-19 pathogens (Chin, et al., 2020; National Academics of Sciences, Engineering & Medicine, 2020). To prevent droplet and surface contact transmission of COVID-19 pathogens during personal hygiene activities the following should be done:

- Wash hands for 40-60 seconds and not close the tap with clean hands (Broussard & Kahwaji, 2020). Disposable tissue paper can be used to close taps and to dry your hands discarding it in the designated waste bin with a lid. If disposable paper towels are not available, clean towels can be used which is replaced daily (Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (c), 2020; World Health Organisation (c), 2020).
- Sanitise hands thereafter using a 70% alcohol-based hand sanitiser/rub (Chin, et al., 2020; National Academics of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2020) and rub them until dry (Broussard & Kahwaji, 2020)
- The caregiver should wash and sanitise their hands before entering the room and after leaving the room (Broussard & Kahwaji, 2020; Douedi & Douedi, 2020).
- The caregiver should wear a medical face mask that covers their mouth and nose when entering the COVID-19 infected person's room and should not touch or handle the mask when wearing it. If the mask gets wet or dirty from secretions, it must be discarded in the dedicated waste bin with a lid and replaced immediately with a new clean mask (World Health Organisation (c), 2020).
- When removing the mask, persons should avoid touching the mask area, they should hold the mask at the ties. Masks should be discarded immediately after use in a dedicated waste bin with a lid and should not be reused. Hands should be washed and sanitised after the removal of the mask (World Health Organisation (c), 2020).
- The COVID-19 infected person should wear a medical facemask as much as possible and replace it daily. If the COVID-19 infected person cannot tolerate a medical mask, the mouth and nose should be covered with disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing (Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (b), 2020; World Health Organisation (c), 2020).
- The COVID-19 infected person should use his/her own toothpaste and other personal care products and it should be kept in the room with the COVID-19 person (Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (c), 2020).
- If a COVID-19 infected person is shearing a toilet with other household members the COVID-19 infected person should have their own dedicated toilet paper (Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (c), 2020).
- The caregiver should wash and sanitise their hands after any type of contact with COVID-19 infected person or their immediate environment (Douedi & Douedi, 2020).
- The caregiver should avoid direct contact with body fluids, especially oral or respiratory secretions (World Health Organisation (c), 2020). A plastic apron (a black waste bin bag could be modified, cutting holes into it for arms and head if no apron is available) and disposable gloves should be used when assisting the COVID-19 infected person with personal hygiene (e.g. brushing teeth, changing clothes and bed linen). The caregiver should wash and sanitise their hands before putting on and after removing plastic apron/black bag, gloves and mask (World Health Organisation (c), 2020). The apron/black bag, gloves and mask should not be reused and be disposed of in the designated waste bin with a lid (World Health Organisation (c), 2020).

Cleaning and disinfecting

COVID-19 pathogens are sensitive to heat and can be deactivated at temperatures of 70°C (Chin, et al., 2020; National Academics of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2020) and when surfaces are cleaned with ethanol (62%-71%), hydrogen peroxide (0.5%) or sodium hypochlorite (0.1%) the COVID-19 pathogens are deactivated (National Academics of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2020; Kampf, et al., 2020). The following methods could be put in place to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 pathogens:

- Hands should be washed as mentioned under personal hygiene

- A COVID-19 infected person should have their own dedicated cutlery (World Health Organisation (c), 2020) and washed if possible in a dishwasher at the highest temperature, alternatively, it could be soaked in boiling water for 10 minutes before it is washed separately with soap and water.
- The surfaces in the room where the COVID-19 infected person is staying should be cleaned and disinfected daily. Special attention should be given to frequently touched areas (e.g. bedside tables, light switches, bed frames) The surfaces should be cleaned with household soap or detergent first, rinsed and then disinfected with a regular household disinfectant containing 0,1% sodium hypochlorite (household bleach) (Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (b), 2020; World Health Organisation (c), 2020; Chin, et al., 2020; National Academics of Sciences, Engineering & Medicine, 2020).
- Bathroom and toilet surfaces should be cleaned once a day. Regular household soap or detergent should be used first for cleaning, then rinsed and lastly, the surfaces should be disinfected with a regular household disinfectant containing 0/1% sodium hypochlorite (household bleach) (World Health Organisation (c), 2020; Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (b), 2020)
 - If a bathroom and/or toilet is shared with other household members it should be cleaned every time after it was used by the COVID-19 infected person (Department of Health, Republic of South Africa (b), 2020)
- The caregiver should wear gloves and protected clothing (e.g. plastic apron/black bag) when cleaning surfaces or when handling clothes/linen of COVID-19 infected person (Broussard & Kahwaji, 2020). As mentioned above the caregiver should wash and sanitise their hands before putting on mask, gloves and apron/black bag and after removing them and discard them in the dedicated waste bin (World Health Organisation (c), 2020).
- COVID-19 infected persons dirty clothes, bed linen, towels should be kept separate from other household members clothes etc. preferably in the infected persons' room
- COVID-19 infected persons clothes, bed linen, towels should be machine washed separately with regular soap and water at a temperature of 70-90°C or soak it in boiling water for 10 minutes before it is hand washed.
- General waste such as gloves, masks generated during self-isolation should be placed into a dedicated waste bin with a lid and kept in the room until it is disposed of (Douedi & Douedi, 2020).

General considerations

- When a COVID-19 infected person has recovered his room and bathroom should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. All furniture, bedding, curtains and surfaces should be washed with general household soap or detergent, rinsed and thereafter be disinfected with a regular household disinfectant containing 0/1% sodium hypochlorite (household bleach) (Kampf, et al., 2020). Disinfecting the environment will prevent the possible transmission of COVID-19 pathogens to other household members
- The caregiver should monitor their own health for 14 days (Liu, et al., 2020) from the last day of caring for the COVID-19 infected person to rule out the possible transmission of COVID-19 infection.

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