



Resources for Older Australians during Coronavirus



The **UNSW Ageing Futures Institute** has compiled a series of resources and tips to help older people through these times of physical distancing. Many of these resources have been suggested by our expert researchers and the UNSW community, and cover six domains of wellness. If you are looking for general information about Coronavirus and older people, click **HERE**.

Click on any domain in the circle below to take you to that resource page:

1. **Physical Wellness** – maintaining your fitness during these times of physical distancing
2. **Environmental Wellness** – ensuring your surroundings contribute positively to your wellbeing
3. **Emotional Wellness** – taking care of your mental health during these challenging times
4. **Social Wellness** – how to safely interact with others and prevent social isolation
5. **Intellectual Wellness** – keeping your brain active with tips to strengthen your mind
6. **Financial Wellness** – managing your finances in times of uncertainty



Older Australians and Coronavirus

Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, is a highly contagious disease that spreads from person to person. The virus has spread quickly throughout the world, infecting millions of people and causing hundreds of thousands of deaths.

How does it spread?

Coronavirus spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes, and small droplets from the nose or mouth travel through the air, or land on objects and surfaces around the person.

You can catch Coronavirus if you:

- Breathe these droplets in, or
- Touch a surface with these droplets and then touch your eyes, nose or mouth

How can I avoid catching it?

You can protect yourself from Coronavirus by **physical distancing** yourself from others.

This means:

- Keeping a 1.5 metre distance away from others where possible
- Temporarily stopping face to face visits
- Avoiding any non-essential travel
- Having groceries and medications delivered

What happens if I catch it?

If you catch Coronavirus, you may experience:

- Fever
- Coughing
- A sore throat
- Difficulty breathing

If you are experiencing serious symptoms such as difficulty breathing, call 000 for urgent medical help.

Why do older people need to take further precaution?

Whilst people of all ages can catch and carry the virus, older people are more likely to become severely ill if they catch the virus.

The majority of deaths from Coronavirus worldwide have been in people 60 and older.



To prevent the spread of the virus, some habits to adopt include:

- Sneezing or coughing into your elbow
- Washing your hands thoroughly with soap for at least 20 seconds
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth

If you are sick and think you might have COVID-19, check your symptoms using healthdirect's Coronavirus Symptom Checker at [healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker/tool/basic-details](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker/tool/basic-details)

If the Symptom Checker tells you to contact your GP, please make sure you call your doctor's clinic first, before your visit.



Stay informed

The following are trustworthy sources of information about Coronavirus:

- **Australian Government Department of Health** provide regular updates and advice in relation to Coronavirus at [health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert)
- **State Health Departments** have specific information about cases, testing centres, and physical distancing laws at [health.gov.au/about-us/contact-us/local-state-and-territory-health-departments](https://www.health.gov.au/about-us/contact-us/local-state-and-territory-health-departments)
- **The World Health Organization** provides information and guidance regarding the current outbreak of Coronavirus at [who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019)
- **National Coronavirus Helpline** is open 24 hours, 7 days a week and will answer any questions you have about Coronavirus. Call 1800 020 080.

Source • Website: research.unsw.edu.au/ageingfutures
• Email: ageingfutures@unsw.edu.au



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Physical Wellness and Coronavirus

As we find ourselves spending more time at home, we need to make sure we maintain a healthy body and keep active. Taking care of your physical health is not only great for ageing well, it could reduce your risk of becoming severely ill in the event you catch diseases such as Coronavirus.

Exercise at home

Keeping active for 20-30 minutes a day ensures your body and mind stay healthy.

There are many ways to exercise at home:

- Walking around the home or yard
 - Gardening
 - Chair yoga
 - Dance lessons
 - Strength exercises
- } Search for free exercise videos at [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Balance exercises

Balance exercises are the single most important exercises to prevent falls. Some good examples are: knee raises, side leg raises, heel raises, stepping up and sit-to-stand exercises.

Institute researcher, **Associate Professor Kim Delbaere** has designed a home-based virtual program to help with reaching the recommended 2 hours per week at standingtall.org.au

Eating well

Eating healthy food is important for your body and your mind.

Research lead by **Professor Kaarin Anstey**, Director of the UNSW Ageing Futures Institute, has shown that the MIND diet is not only healthy for the body, but can reduce the risk of decline in thinking and memory abilities. Read about the MIND diet at [healthline.com/nutrition/mind-diet](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/mind-diet)

Some foods to eat on the MIND diet include:

- Vegetables
- Berries
- Nuts
- Olive oil
- Whole grains
- Fish
- Beans
- Chicken



Sleep

Getting 7-8 hours of sleep is great for our immune systems.

You can improve your sleep by:

- Going to bed the same time
- Staying away from TVs and other screens before bed
- Limiting your intake of tea and coffee in the afternoon



Avoid alcohol and drugs

Staying at home can, for some people, lead to increased alcohol, cigarette and drug use.

"When it comes to alcohol, less is better. Ensure a number of days free from alcohol and monitor your consumption to keep within guidelines. Check and ensure that any other medications such as pain killers or sleeping tablets are kept to the absolute minimum."

Professor Michael Farrell

Director, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre

More advice

Below are some suggestions if you are looking to improve your physical wellness:

- **Talk to your GP** before starting any new exercise or diet routine. Call your doctor who may be able to visit or organise an online telehealth consultation service.
- **Safe Exercise at Home** have a range of exercises that you can do safely at home. For more information on physical activity and exercise for older people, search safeexerciseathome.org.au
- **Healthdirect** have a collection of resources about how to ensure you take medication safely. Go to [healthdirect.gov.au/medication-safety-for-older-people](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/medication-safety-for-older-people)

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Environmental Wellness and Coronavirus

Physical distancing prevents the spread of Coronavirus. As a result, we find we are spending more time in our homes and residences. As our surroundings can greatly impact how we feel and function, it is vital that we take the time to make sure our environment is as optimal as possible.

Modifying your home

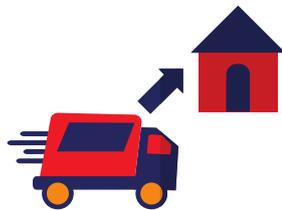
Does your home need modifying to help you:

- Prepare your own meals?
- Move more easily around the house?
- Safely shower or go to the toilet?

The Home Modification Service Directory is a great one-stop-shop that provides information about services in your area. Visit homemods.info

Shopping from home

Many supermarkets, greengrocers, butchers, shops and restaurants are providing online or telephone ordering and delivery.



Most places offer contactless delivery, an extra step to keep you and your home virus-free.

Connect with nature

Being around nature is positive for health and wellbeing. Below are some top tips to keep you connected to nature during physical distancing.

- Indoor plants are a great way to create a more green and relaxing living space
- Open your windows to get some fresh air
- Make it a habit to get some sunshine by spending time outside

More information

The following are trustworthy sources of information to improve your Environmental Wellness:

- **Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute** have a list of resources that impact housing, homelessness and cities. Go to ahuri.edu.au/news-and-media/covid-19/covid-19-resources
- **MyAgedCare** provide services for older people, like help with daily tasks around the house or the delivery of meals. Find a provider at myagedcare.gov.au/find-a-provider or call 1800 200 422
- Contact your **local council** (www.lgam.info/list-of-australian-councils) or your state or territory **Council on the Ageing (COTA)** office (cota.org.au/get-involved/visit-stateor-territory-cota) to find out what your city or community is doing to become more age-friendly

Carers and Providers

Carers and providers of aged care can take steps to protect older people from Coronavirus.

Professor Catherine Bridge, researcher at the UNSW Ageing Futures Institute, has shared the following factsheet to make others more aware of these issues. Access this factsheet at homemods.info/resources/hminfo-research-publications/industry/covid-19

What to buy

During these times, it is important to have the following household supplies:

- Medicines/ prescription medication
- Disposable or dishwashing gloves
- Toilet paper and tissues
- Toothpaste
- Hand soap and hand sanitiser
- Dishwashing liquid

Safe transport around your community

If leaving home is essential, make sure you are using transport safely. Tips from researcher **Associate Professor Soufiane Boufous** are:

- Avoid **public transport** but if you must use it, travel outside peak hours to avoid crowds
- Follow existing rules of physical distancing when **walking**
- Pay extra attention to the higher number of cyclists and walkers when **driving**

Emotional Wellness and Coronavirus

In times of uncertainty, it is important to keep a close eye on your emotional and mental wellness. Some days, you may feel overwhelmed with the news or the restrictions to daily life. To help you through these times, below are top tips you can use to care for yourself and your emotions.

Limit media exposure

It seems like every minute there is a new article or update about Coronavirus.

Staying up-to-date with factual information is important. However the frequent media coverage of the pandemic may leave you feeling anxious and overwhelmed. Try to limit media exposure by focusing on other hobbies or activities.

Get creative

Professor Jill Bennett, lead investigator at the UNSW Ageing Futures Institute, says engaging our creative side can help us understand and express our feelings in challenging times.

Get creative at home by:

- Reading books or listening to audio-books
- Visit galleries online and join those remaking famous masterpieces at home

Meditate

Meditation has been shown to:

- Reduce stress levels
- Improve focus and sleep
- Boost mental wellbeing

To learn how to meditate, Headspace provide some simple meditation guides at: [headspace.com/covid-19](https://www.headspace.com/covid-19)



Practice mindfulness

In times of stress your mind can race with thoughts about the past and the future. Mindfulness is being aware of your thoughts, and focusing on the here and now. Practicing mindfulness during hard times can reduce stress and make you more accepting of yourself.

Institute researcher **Dr Gail Kenning** suggests following some simple mindfulness exercises at [soundcloud.com/artofmindfulness](https://www.soundcloud.com/artofmindfulness)

Stick to a routine

Having structure and routine to your day is important for your mental health.

Some tips to help you include:

- Waking up at the same time every day
- Eat breakfast, wash up and get dressed as you would normally
- Take time to do your normal work, exercise, cooking and chores

Talk to a Psychologist

A psychologist is a qualified professional who can help you manage your stress and anxiety.

You can access a psychologist by:

- Asking your GP/doctor to refer you
- Using the Find a Psychologist service by going to: [findapsychologist.org.au](https://www.findapsychologist.org.au) or calling 1800 333 497

More services

The following are trustworthy organisations and sources of support during the Coronavirus pandemic:

- **Black Dog Institute** have an Online Clinic that provides a free mental health assessment. To access go to: [onlineclinic.blackdoginstitute.org.au](https://www.onlineclinic.blackdoginstitute.org.au)
- **BeyondBlue** provide information and support, including online community forums to support emotional wellbeing. Go to [coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au](https://www.coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au) or call 1800 512 348.
- **Lifeline** provides support if you are experiencing suicidal thoughts or going through personal crisis. Go to [lifeline.org.au/about-lifeline/contact-us](https://www.lifeline.org.au/about-lifeline/contact-us) or call 13 11 14.

Social Wellness and Coronavirus

We all must do our bit to stay at home and follow physical distancing recommendations by health authorities. This means changing the way we interact with other people – using technology, such as the Internet, computers and phones, to keep in touch with workmates, friends and relatives.

Keeping your distance...

Physical distancing does not mean locking yourself indoors.

If you practice good hygiene and keep 1.5 metres from others, you can still enjoy:

- Gardening in your backyard or balcony
- Getting some sun on the porch
- Talking to your neighbours (from a distance)

...while keeping connected

Keep connected with others through technology on your computer, ipad or smartphone:

- Skype is a videocalling program where you can video call people for free ([skype.com](https://www.skype.com))
- Facebook is a social media site that lets you interact with friends ([facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com))
- WhatsApp is a free messaging and videocalling program ([whatsapp.com](https://www.whatsapp.com))

What if I don't have the Internet?

If you do not have access to the Internet, there are many ways to keep socially connected.

- Spend some time connecting with the people you are living with
- Phone someone to check in with them
- Leave a note at someone's front door
- Organise safe interactions with your friends or relatives - like writing letters to each other

Can I see my grandchildren?

You may be faced with the difficult decision of whether it is safe to see your grandchildren.

Institute member **Dr Stephanie Ward** suggests that families discuss the impacts of physical distancing. "There are many ways to still stay connected with your grandchildren, or other children in your life, if apart - talking at a safe distance, video calling, or mailing letters to each other."

Living with Dementia

If you are living with Dementia, or caring for someone with Dementia, this might be a heightened period of isolation with many services closing.

Dementia Australia have an online chat and other sources of assistance and support at [dementia.org.au/help/line/webchat](https://www.dementia.org.au/help/line/webchat)

I need to talk to someone

The **National COVID Older Persons Information Hotline** supports older people feeling lonely or distressed about Coronavirus.

Call 1800 171 866 between 8:30am-5:00pm (AEST) on weekdays.



More tips

The following sources of information provide a range of ways to support your social wellness:

- **Probus Clubs** provides a great opportunity to connect with older people in the local community. Search for your local clubs at [probussouthpacific.org/directories/lookup](https://www.probussouthpacific.org/directories/lookup) or call 1300 630 488.
- **Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association** have a directory of computer clubs you can browse and join [ascca.org.au/index.php/seniors-computer-courses/computer-clubs-directory](https://www.ascca.org.au/index.php/seniors-computer-courses/computer-clubs-directory).
- **SANE Australia** have an online forum where you can chat with health professionals and other people about your thoughts and feelings. Read more and register at [saneforums.org](https://www.saneforums.org)

Intellectual Wellness and Coronavirus

There are many ways you can keep your mind active during the pandemic. Many everyday activities are now possible to do through the Internet. Training your brain is also important, not only to stave off feelings of boredom, but to keep your mind sharp and lower the risk of dementia.

Virtual excursions

Visiting museums and landmarks around the world and browsing libraries and books is all possible from the safety of your home.

- Take online tours of art museums or famous landmarks at artsandculture.google.com
- Attend music events at the Sydney Opera House at sydneyoperahouse.com/digital
- Borrow and read books at openlibrary.org

Participate in research

Researchers are always looking for members of the public to participate in their projects.

Through technology such as your computer or phone, you can contribute to many interesting projects. By participating you may also learn something new and increase your understanding of different topics.

Learn something new

Join online courses to expand your knowledge and learn about new things - from languages to media to maths.

UNSW have many free short online courses available to sign up to:

- coursera.org/unsw
- futurelearn.com/partners/unsw-sydney
- openlearning.com/unswmoocs

More resources

The following are some more resources to help you manage intellectual wellness:

- **UNSW Ageing Futures Institute** are always looking for members of the public who are interested in participating in research. If you are interested, please email us at ageingfutures@unsw.edu.au
- **University of the Third Age** offers hundreds of courses, lectures, and presentations for older people who are no longer working full-time. Find out more at sydneyu3a.org or call 02 9267 9056.
- **The International Research Network on Dementia Prevention** have fantastic resources on how to reduce the risk of developing dementia at coghealth.net.au/community-knowledge-hub

Online events

You can improve your intellectual wellness by attending online events. From participating in discussions about your favourite topics, to watching real-time debates or learning something new at international conferences.

Eventbrite has tens of thousands of online events you can attend from your home. Go to eventbrite.com.au/d/online/events

Some current projects include:

- **FluTracking** - helps monitor the spread of flu and Coronavirus (info.flutracking.net)
- **PatientsLikeMe** - a program that gives you the platform to share your experiences if you have had a disease (patientslikeme.com)
- **Citizen science** projects, such as recording frog calls (frogid.net.au) and collecting data about Birds (birddata.birdlife.org.au)

Play online games

Games such as chess, crosswords, puzzles and card games can be played on the Internet. You can even challenge your friends to a game!

A list of safe game sites can be found below:

- seniorsonline.vic.gov.au/services-information/games
- greatseniorliving.com/articles/games-for-seniors
- games.aarp.org/

Financial Wellness and Coronavirus

Strict global border restrictions have affected many sectors, including trade, tourism and events. Many workplaces have also been impacted by physical distancing laws, with many organisations moving to remote work, or closing their doors and services for the unforeseeable future.

Superannuation

Your superannuation fund balance may have been impacted as a result of Coronavirus.

Institute researcher **Rafal Chomik** encourages Australians nearing retirement to "speak to your fund or adviser and weigh up options before making decisions about your superannuation that may negatively impact retirement income. Remember that selling shares when they hit rock bottom could lock in losses."

Employment in older age

Australians are working to older ages. If you are planning on staying in the workforce into late age, or looking to return to work, remember that the longer you stay away from the job market the harder it may be to get back into work.

For those below pension age and still employed, check with your employer about your eligibility for JobKeeper payments.

Online banking

Approximately 50% of older Australians do their banking over the Internet.

Contact your bank to get more information and see if online banking is right for you to:

- Pay bills without leaving the house
- Have 24/7 access to accounts and services
- Use contactless payment methods instead of handling cash that may carry the virus

You may also need to figure out how changing working conditions have impacted your tax.

The UNSW Tax Clinic provides free, independent and confidential tax advice and support. Call 02 9385 8041 or go to business.unsw.edu.au/about/schools/taxation-business-law/unsw-tax-clinic

Financial hardship

If you are experiencing financial hardship, either in general or as a result of Coronavirus, the National Debt Helpline provides free support to help you get back on track.

Call 1800 077 077 or go to ndh.org.au/debt-problems/covid19



Avoid scams

There has been a spike in scam phone calls, texts and emails during the Pandemic.

To avoid being scammed:

- Hang up telephone calls from strangers
- Never share your credit card details, date of birth, passwords or other similar information
- Ask people you trust for advice
- Keep informed at scamwatch.gov.au

More services

The following are support services you can contact to better manage your financial wellness:

- **MyAgedCare** have a list of services for older people and carers who require financial assistance and help with payments. Go to myagedcare.gov.au/support-financially-disadvantaged-people
- **Services Australia** provide information whether you are retired, planning for retirement or looking to work past Age Pension age. Go to servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/older-australians
- **Older Workers** is Australia's only national job board connecting older job seekers with age-friendly employers. Go to olderworkers.com.au