

Prepare for COVID-19

Tips and Resources for LGBT Elders and those living with HIV

by SAGE's National Resource Center on LGBT Aging

LGBT elders are already less likely than their heterosexual and cisgender peers to reach out to health and aging providers, like senior centers, meal programs, and other programs designed to ensure their health and wellness, because they fear discrimination and harassment. The devastating impact of COVID-19 on older people – the current mortality rate is at 15% for this population – makes this a huge issue for the entire LGBT community.

Because LGBT elders and older people living with HIV are at higher risk for experiencing the COVID-19 virus more acutely, it is important to take steps to make emergency plans that can help reduce your risk of contracting the virus.

In addition, it's important for trans people to be prepared for obstacles if an outbreak happens in their communities. The National Center for Transgender Equality's fact sheet is an excellent resource for trans people and the people who care for them: <https://transequality.org/covid19>.

Below are a few tips and resources you can use to develop your personalized emergency preparedness plan.

Most importantly, call your doctor. If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms, such as cough or difficulty breathing, call your healthcare provider for medical advice.

Creating a Plan – Advice from the CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/features/older-adult-emergency/index.html>

The first step in preparing for an emergency is creating a plan. Work with your friends, family, and neighbors to develop a plan that will fit your needs.

- Choose a contact person who will check on you during a disaster, and decide how you will communicate with each other (for instance, by telephone, knocking on doors). Consider speaking with your neighbors about developing a check-in system together.
- Create a list of contact information for family members and friends. Leave a copy by your phone(s) and include one in your Emergency Supply Kit.
- Plan how you will leave and where you will go during an evacuation. If you are living in a retirement or assisted living community, learn what procedures are in place in case of emergencies. Keep a copy of exit routes and meeting places in an easy-to-reach place.

Create a care plan and keep a copy in your Emergency Supply Kit. Try out CDC's easy-to-use [care plan templateCdc-pdf](#).

Additional Tips and Resources:

- **Food assistance**
Contact your Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and register for home delivered meals (commonly referred to Meals on Wheels). You can search for your AAA here: <https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.aspx> or call 1-800-677-1116.
- **Register with Local Special Needs Registry**
Many city and county governments have a Special Needs Registry where older adults and people with special needs can sign up to be contacted for safety and well-being checks by emergency personnel during times of disaster and other emergency situations.
- **Phone a friend**
Stay connected by phone, email, or video chat with family and friends. This will help reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation.
- **Look for helpers**
Many people at lower-risk for severe outcomes related to COVID-19 want to help. Think of things you might need help with such as grocery shopping and picking up prescriptions and ask if they can help. You can arrange for them to drop your groceries and prescriptions at your front door or porch to maintain social distancing.
- **Call the SAGE Hotline at 877-360-LGBT (5428)**
Talk and be heard at the SAGE LGBT Elder Hotline. We connect LGBT older people who want to talk with friendly responders who are ready to listen. If you are an LGBT elder or care for one, call the free SAGE Hotline, toll-free, at 877-360-LGBT (5428). The Hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in English and Spanish, with translation in 180 languages and managed by SAGE's partner, [United Way Worldwide](#).

See additional prevention steps from the CDC here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

Visit SAGE's blog for more info at <http://sageusa.org/coronavirus>