

# Home care guide for an adult patient

27.01.2022

## What to do in the case of a fever?

- Drink plenty of fluids. At higher temperatures, your metabolism is faster and the need for fluids is higher – this way you avoid dehydration. With an adequate fluid intake, the urine is light yellow and clear. If the urine becomes dark it's a sign that your fluid intake may be too low. Water is preferable as a drink, but you can choose other non-alcoholic drinks as well.
- Adequate rest is crucial.
- If you have a fever over 38.5° C or feel unwell, you may try over-the-counter painkillers like paracetamol, ibuprofen, dexketoprofen or aspirin. The following table shows the doses for adults and the maximum allowed daily intake.

Active substance	Single dose	How many times per day	Maximum daily intake
Paracetamol	1000 mg	4	4000 mg*
Ibuprofen	400–600 mg	2–4	2400 mg
Dexketoprofen	25 mg	3	75 mg
Aspirin	1000 mg	4	4000 mg

\* Elderly and people with liver diseases 2000 mg

## What to do about a cough?

- A cough and feeling breathless can be relieved by reducing the temperature in the room you're mostly staying in and adjusting the humidity to higher. It is recommended to ventilate the rooms several times a day by opening a window. However, ventilation fans should be avoided as they might spread the virus.
- Avoid lying on your back for a long time. While sleeping or laying on a bed, try to alternate between lying on your sides and on your stomach. A semi-sitting position could also help.
- An adequate fluid intake is also important for coughs – If you drink more, mucus becomes more runny and flows better and this makes it easier to cough out.
- Try soothing the cough with a spoonful of honey and warm tea.
- If you have a nebulizer or steam inhaler at home, you can make cool steam with saline solution. Making steam with a nebulizer can emit aerosols like a fan, so a sick person should do it alone in their room and ventilate the room properly after the procedure.

*The inhalation of a steam or soda vapor by bending over a hot water pot is not recommended, as there is an increased risk of burns and swelling in the airways.*

- In the case of a productive cough with lots of mucus, you can try over-the-counter expectorants according to your preference – either natural (e.g. ivy, myrtle) or synthetic (ambroxol, acetylcysteine, carbocysteine) ones. A pharmacist can advise you on your choice.
- Nasal rinsing with saline or a sea salt solution helps to moisturize the nose and throat, it can also relieve a dry cough. Nasal rinses with a Neti Pot in a bathroom should be avoided if you live with healthy family members – the risk of contaminating the bathroom with the virus is high. In this case, you should rinse your nose in a room where other family members will not be during your illness.

## How to relieve the feeling of difficult breathing and shortness of breath?

- Ventilate the room several times a day.
- Sit in a chair with your back straight and with your shoulders relaxed, tilting your body forward – your hands can rest on your knees or on the sides of the chair.
- Try to breathe in slowly through your nose and out through your mouth, as if trying to gently blow out a candle.
- If you have trouble with relieving a cough, or the cough is very dry, be sure to inform your family doctor.
- Antibiotic or antiviral therapy is not usually required and, as a rule, not prescribed. The need for medication will be decided by your family doctor, according to your condition.

## What else should be kept in mind?

- COVID-19 is associated with a higher risk of thrombosis – therefore, it is important to make sure you drink enough fluids during the day and that you try to move yourself regularly. Although fatigue can be very high, getting out of bed for a few minutes and moving around the room is recommended.
- If you move around the room regularly during your illness, you can also assess yourself and recognize when physical activity is becoming harder for you - and you can let your family doctor know sooner.
- Regular breathing exercises are recommended: breathing with pursed lips, blowing soap bubbles, blowing bubbles in a water bottle with a wide straw, or blowing air into a balloon might help. All of these exercises are aerosol generating, and if you live in a household with healthy people, these should be done in a separate room, where other family members do not enter during the illness, to prevent them from becoming infected. The room should be ventilated after exercising.

## If you have a pulse oximeter at home

- A pulse oximeter is a device used to assess the level of oxygen in the blood. Dropping readings on the pulse oximeter sometimes help to recognize that the situation is getting worse, before the signs that indicate the aggravation of the disease appear, such as a persistent feeling of shortness of breath and difficult breathing.
- Pulse oximeters labelled with the CE quality sign are recommended – these meet quality standards and are likely reliable.

*The benefits of pulse oximeters on smart devices are limited – as soon as the oxygen level in the blood falls, most smart devices become inaccurate and do not give a valid picture of the condition.*

- If a device is available at home or has been given to you from a family doctor's center, it is advisable to record the readings measured during the day and, if necessary, forward them to the doctor or nurse.
- An oxygen reading of a pulse oximeter can be affected by various activities. With deeper breathing, the oxygen levels rise. If you hold your breath, the oxygen levels may drop. Occasionally, with COVID-19, oxygen levels may be normal at the rest state and fall after exercising. This should also be recorded.

## If the pulse oximeter reading is

95..100%	The reading is within the normal range – continue measuring at home
93..94%	Repeat the measuring within an hour – if the reading remains the same, report it to your family doctor as soon as possible.
< 92%	Repeat the measuring within a few minutes. If the reading is still < 92, it is necessary to call an ambulance or, if possible, have a family member to take you to the Emergency department safely. You should not drive yourself.

## Let your family doctor know, as soon as possible, if

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- you feel worse and worse, or
- if you have difficulty breathing while moving around at home,
- if you suddenly feel extremely weak and tired.

## An ambulance should be called, when

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- the difficulties in breathing are so much that you cannot speak in full sentences while in a resting position;
- the breathing has deteriorated sharply;
- you feel very cold, and at the same time the skin is sweaty and very pale or patchy, with a marble pattern;
- if you develop a rash resembling small bruises under the skin, that does not change color or shape when pressed on with transparent glass;
- if you have fainted;
- if you feel very anxious, confused or much drowsier than before.

