

# 5 STEPS

## for Managing patients with COVID-19 at home: *Tips for health care providers*

THIS INFORMATION IS TO AID  
HEALTHCARE PROVIDER THAT  
CARE FOR COVID-19 PATIENTS

1

### Determine if the patient has COVID-19 infection

If you suspect someone has COVID-19, arrange testing according to local protocols.

If they have severe breathlessness, confusion, chest pain, or are unable to take care of themselves, admit them to a hospital immediately.

If a COVID-19 test is negative and symptoms persist, the test may need to be repeated, or there could be another cause.

Check the Oxygen saturations for all suspected COVID-19 patients and admit those with oxygen saturations below 94%, and those with comorbidities into a treatment facility

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### Advise the patients to do the following

- a. Isolate a confirmed patient from other people, and rest, in a separate, well-ventilated room if feasible, or more than 1 metre away from others
- b. If feasible, the patient should also use a separate bathroom.
- c. Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated.
- d. Have a nutritious diet.
- e. Wear a mask.
- f. Use separate utensils for food and drink, avoid speaking during the meal.
- g. Open their windows to improve ventilation.

**Manage fever:** Provide paracetamol for fever, headache, or body ache (check dose for weight and dose, for adults >50kg, 1000mg at least 6 hours between doses, maximum 4g/4000mg per day including any combination medications).

If fever continues despite this, tell the patient may place a cold wet cloth on the forehead.

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Check the oxygen saturation level of all patients using a pulse oximeter. For patients on home-based care, explain how to use the pulse oximeter and what to do with the results. A few guidance is:

**a. If oxygen saturation is 94% or above:**

- i. Check oxygen saturations with pulse oximeter 3 times a day for those with symptoms who have risk factors for severe disease<sup>1</sup>
- ii. Continue with symptomatic management of the patient

**b. If oxygen saturation is 90% or more, but less than 94%:**

- i. Seek hospital care
- ii. Consider if prone positioning, or other repositioning may improve oxygenation, if the patient is able, but weigh against potential risks
- iii. Reassess the patient, if oxygen level is not improving, arrange for hospital admission for effective management

**c. If oxygen saturation is less than 90%:**

- i. Arrange for admission into a health facility with capacity to manage the patient **immediately**
- ii. Transfer the patient with oxygen, usually starting at 5 litres per minute with titration to response
- iii. Advise prone positioning, or other repositioning, if safe to do so

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Continue with steps 2 and 3 for stable patients with oxygen saturation of 94% or above

For patients with oxygen saturation of 94% and above, with improving symptoms – continue with steps 2 & 3.

For patients with worsening symptoms such as breathlessness, confusion, chest pain, or extreme weakness, admit them to hospital immediately.

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Provide needed instructions to the patient's family on the following:

- a. Only one person in the household should be the caregiver for the patient
- b. The other members of the household should stay in a separate room from the patient, if possible, or keep a distance of at least 1 metre.
- c. Everyone should wear a mask properly
- d. While providing food for the patients, the caregiver must wear a mask properly, and maintain distance of 1 metre
- e. Everyone in the household should wash their hands regularly with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer
- f. Windows should be opened for ventilation
- g. Food should be served to the patient in disposable plates or utensils kept separate or wash the plates and utensils with soap and water if not disposable
- h. Surfaces should be frequently sanitized
- i. Monitor the household for symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 (see step 1)

1 Risk factors for severe disease according to WHO guidance

- Age more than 60 years
- Underlying noncommunicable diseases (NCDs); diabetes, hypertension, cardiac disease, chronic lung diseases, dementia, mental disorders, chronic kidney disease, obesity among others
- Smoking