

# COVID-19 Advice for people with SCI: #1: Keeping Safe

## *What are the symptoms of COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus)?*

The symptoms of covid-19 infection are:

- A cough
- A high temperature
- Shortness of breath

Some people may have only minor symptoms

## *What should I do if I am worried I might have contracted COVID-19?*

At the moment, the number of people in NZ diagnosed with COVID-19 is limited. If you are worried about symptoms, call the special COVID-19 Healthline free on 0800 358 5453. Do **NOT** go directly to your GP (most GP's are requesting you call them in advance) or other healthcare environment such as your nearest hospital or spinal unit unless specifically told to do so by Healthline. They may be able to arrange getting you tested.

The latest Ministry of Health information about COVID-19 can be found at:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

Also check out "<https://nzspinaltrust.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Covid-19-Advice-for-people-with-SCI-If-you-think-you-have-it.pdf>"

## *What is the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19?*

The coronavirus is spread through droplets when coughing and sneezing or by close contact with someone who has the virus. It can be spread from close contact (within 2 meters of the infected individual). It is believed that the infected person is most contagious when they are most symptomatic.

The best way to prevent spread is:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home and work environment.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Social distancing: You should avoid public places if you cannot prevent face-to-face contact closer than 2 metres from other people.
- Consider whether outings and travel, both individual and family, are sensible and necessary.

## *How is COVID-19 treated?*

Currently, there is no specific vaccine or treatment. The best way to recover from it is to:

- Get plenty of rest
- Keep hydrated
- Take simple remedies such as paracetamol to help with symptoms such as a high temperature

## *What are the specific needs of SCI people?*

SCI people are no more likely to catch COVID-19 than anyone else, but because many SCI people have suppressed immune systems or respiratory issues, the consequences of COVID-19 may be more severe. Therefore, people with SCI their family/Whānau, friends and healthcare professionals should very vigorously the advice above and their own infection control routines.

If you have care staff, especially those who support multiple people, should be particularly observant. (refer "<https://nzspinaltrust.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Covid-19-Advice-for-people-with-SCI-If-youve-got-Carers.pdf>")

## *I use a ventilator. Are there any special precautions I should take?*

As COVID-19 is a respiratory infection, you are at much greater risk of very serious outcomes if you acquire COVID-19. Practice social distancing, avoid traveling to affected areas, traveling on planes or large group gatherings. Wash your hands frequently.

## *What else should I do to prepare?*

- If you require assistance with cares, ensure you have sufficient backup in case your regular carer or personal assistant cannot work. You may want to contact your care agency to discuss this.
- Have at least a week of non-perishable food in your home at any given time and identify people who can assist with shopping or delivery.
- Stock up on other important supplies (e.g., toilet paper, cleaning supplies, hygiene products, etc.).
- Identify a way to make sure you can get your medications in a timely manner such as having friends or family assist you or using a pharmacy that offers a home delivery service'.
- Regularly clean, sanitize and disinfect the surfaces that are touched in your home to prevent spread of infection.
- Use disinfecting wipes on items that are frequently touched.
- Don't forget to plan for your pets by stocking pet food
- Think of strategies for managing your mental health and stay connected – if you are not already a member, consider joining the Connecting People Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/connectingpeoplENZ/> .

**NB: If you are experiencing symptoms of fever and respiratory infection check out ["https://nzspinaltrust.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Covid-19-Advice-for-people-with-SCI-If-you-think-you-have-it.pdf"](https://nzspinaltrust.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Covid-19-Advice-for-people-with-SCI-If-you-think-you-have-it.pdf).**

### **Acknowledgements:**

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Fact Sheet – Shepard Centre, Atlanta, Georgia, USA  
Spinal Injuries Assn briefing on SCI & Coronavirus – SIA, Milton Keynes, UK  
Spinal Injuries Assn advice for SCI persons – SIA, Milton Keynes, UK



Disclaimer: These details are provided for informational purposes only and are not meant to be a substitute for advice provided by a doctor or other medical professional



Release ver 1.0 17/03/2020