CHRISTOPHER & DANA REEVE FOUNDATION
PARALYSIS RESOURCE CENTER

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a rapidly emerging disease that has infected tens of thousands of people around the world; as of March 10, the U.S counted more than 1,000 cases across three dozen states and Washington, D.C. Much remains unknown about the disease and how it spreads, however the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warns that older adults and anyone with underlying health issues face increased risk of developing more severe cases of COVID-19.

It is critical for these high-risk communities, including those living with spinal cord injuries, to monitor for symptoms and follow recommended preventative measures in order to reduce exposure.

Be Aware of Symptoms:

 Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

If you experience any of these symptoms, seek medical attention immediately. Medicare Part B covers coronavirus testing when ordered by a doctor or health care provider, effective February 4, 2020. For more information, visit Medicare.gov.

How to Reduce Risk of Infection:

- Wash hands frequently with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds. A demonstration of effective hand-washing as recommended by the World Health Organization can be viewed here. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer.

- Do not touch your eyes, nose and mouth.

- Ask caregivers to wash hands as soon as they arrive at your home and before touching or feeding you.

- Avoid crowds and busy public spaces as much as possible; postpone all air travel and vacation cruises until the CDC indicates the virus has run its course.

- Try to stay at least three feet from anyone sneezing or coughing.

- If family members become sick, have them move to a separate room, if possible, while they recover to limit your exposure to the disease.

- Regularly clean and disinfect countertops, doorknobs and any frequently touched objects (including phone, keyboards and touch screens.)

How to Prepare for COVID-19 Outbreaks in Your Community

- Stock up on medications and important household items, including medical supplies, pantry staples and pet food, so you can limit public outings during a local outbreak.

- Arrange for back-up care in case a primary caregiver or attendant becomes sick.

- Arrange for back-up transportation in case your local provider is affected.

Additional Resources

ACL: What Do Older Adults and People with Disabilities Need to Know

CDC Coronavirus Factsheet

CDC Coronavirus Updates

Center for Medicare and Medicaid: Coverage and Benefits Related to COVID-19 for Medicaid and CHIP

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation: SCI, Flu and Coronavirus

Forbes: 5 Things to Know About Coronavirus and People with Disabilities

Multiple Sclerosis Association of America: MS and Coronavirus

STAT News Breakdown of Coronavirus Risk Factors by Demographics

World Health Organization Recommendations

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