

seniors first BC

THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON SENIORS

“COVID-19 impacts the physical, social, mental as well as emotional well-being of seniors. Among adults, the risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at highest risk (CDC, 2020).”

This blog post will look at what COVID-19 is, its physical effects on the body, its mental effects, how it affects social and emotional well-being, and its role in the issue of elder abuse.

What is COVID-19?

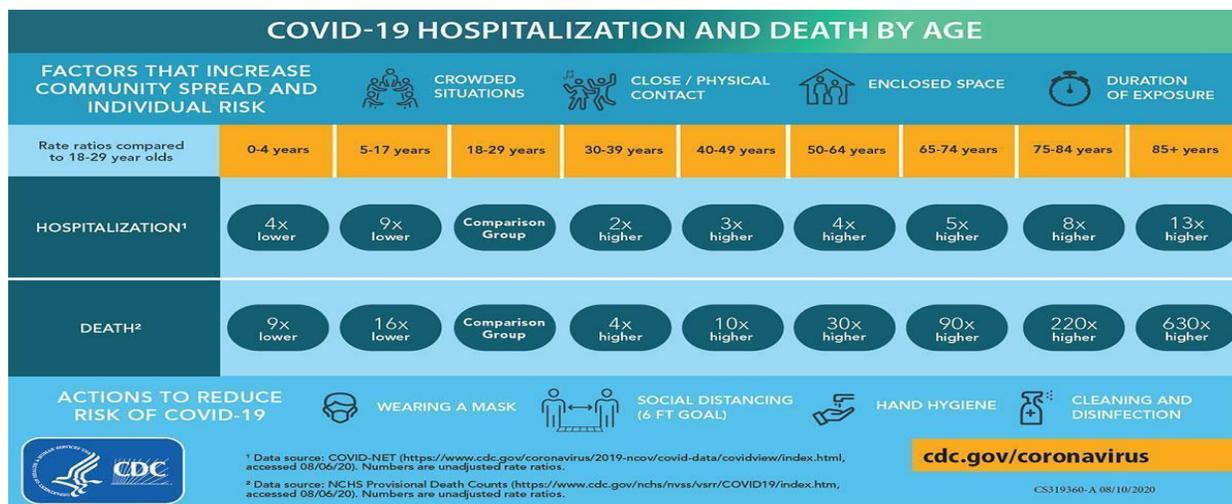
Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) belongs to a group of viruses that cause illnesses such as common cold and severe acute respiratory syndrome (MayoClinic, 2020). In 2019, this virus was identified as the cause of a disease outbreak in China. The resulting disease is called coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The World Health Organization declared the coronavirus outbreak a global pandemic in March 2020. Being coughed or sneezed on by an infected individual and being in close proximity (within 6 feet or 2 metres) with an infected individual increases the risk of contracting COVID-19. Common signs and symptoms include fever, cough, and fatigue.



Source: CDC.gov. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-age.html>

Physical effects

Aging results in the loss of some function in all the vital organs and systems in the body. The immune system weakens and its ability to fight off pathogens decreases. This makes older people more susceptible to infections. Therefore, older adults are more easily infected with COVID-19 compared to others. Seniors may experience physical symptoms such as shortness of breath, muscle aches, chills, chest pain, and headache. Additionally, seniors living with cardiovascular, autoimmune or respiratory diseases are at a higher risk of suffering serious complications such as pneumonia, organ failure, and severe respiratory distress and in some cases, death (MayoClinic, 2020). **The World Health Organization data from April 2020 shows that more than 95% of COVID-19 deaths were among people over 60 years of age, and more than half of all deaths occurred in people of 80 years and above.**



Source: [CDC.gov https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-age.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-age.html)

<p>Get dressed, feel good</p> <p>Put on something that makes you feel good. Try doing your hair or makeup to start the day feeling confident.</p>	<p>Eat healthy foods</p> <p>Make sure to eat fruits and veggies. Try a new recipe, and rely on frozen produce when you can't grocery shop often.</p>
<p>Take time for prayer or meditation.</p> <p>Prayer or meditation are great ways to refocus and take time for yourself.</p>	<p>Get some fresh air</p> <p>Fresh air helps you feel less "stuck" inside the home. Make sure to stay 6 feet from others when you are outdoors.</p>
<p>Be creative</p> <p>Try new activities or bring back old ones. Getting creative is a great way to keep your mood up and mind relaxed.</p>	<p>Unplug</p> <p>Take a break from news and social media if it makes you feel upset. You deserve some time away.</p>
<p>Stay connected</p> <p>Call, video chat, or exchange snail mail with loved ones to stay in touch. This will help you feel less isolated.</p>	<p>Reach out</p> <p>It's normal to feel stressed and worried. Reach out to loved ones or a professional if you need help.</p>

Mental effects

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the mental health of older adults. **A research published in the Journal of Immunology and Immunotherapy that delirium or mental confusion accompanied with fever could be a symptom of COVID-19 in elderly patients.** The fear of contracting coronavirus and living in quarantine due to lockdown may cause seniors to suffer from anxiety, restlessness, and

depression. Isolation and loneliness can also result in cognitive decline, which can eventually lead to dementia.

Source: Henry Ford health system <https://www.henryford.com/about/community-health/covid19>

Effect on social and emotional well-being



Source: Tealridge retirement community <https://www.tealridge.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/senior-man-with-adult-daughter-300x200.jpg>

This pandemic has had detrimental impacts on the social and emotional well-being of seniors. Most of them reported experiencing feelings of loneliness and sadness due to self-isolation and being away from friends and family. The inability to go to social events, attend exercise classes, and meet up with friends has made some seniors feel detached from the world.

Elder abuse

One of the worst consequences of COVID-19 lockdowns is the increase in elder abuse. **In many cases, the increased dependency of seniors on their caregivers has led to an increase in financial, physical, and verbal abuse.** Financial constraints and unemployment caused by the pandemic may further hinder the ability of seniors to move away from the perpetrators of abuse in their lives. Appropriate abuse prevention interventions and community support programs should be implemented to prevent abuse.

CONTRIBUTOR

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