

Are you a volunteer?

Are you involved with a COVID-19 response group?

Many people want to offer help to those who need it the most during this time of physical distancing and isolation. Now more than ever, initiatives designed to help people in need are important.

To maximize the impact of those initiatives and reduce the risks of spreading the virus, it is essential that each group take the right precautions and follow public health recommendations: the recommendations quickly change as the situation evolves.

If you're already part of a response group or if you plan to join one, here is some important information to protect yourself and the people you are helping. The recommendations are meant to assist community support while minimizing the risks of spreading COVID-19.

What you can do

It's important to remember that the overall message is to stay home as much as possible. **Staying at home is a citizen action that is just as useful as offering time and energy to help others.**

ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO

Low risk for health + significant benefits

- Set up telephone trees and support services by phone or through the Internet (e.g. friendly calls, support groups on social networks).
- Work with priority food services, such as [Meals on Wheels](#) or [food banks](#).
- Buy and deliver essential products to people who are confined to their homes, especially seniors.
- Share reliable information and raising awareness about recommended protective measures, which are continually changing.

ACTIVITIES TO AVOID

At higher risk of accidentally spreading COVID-19

For example:

- Door-to-door activities.
- Any activity where people gather.

Since you're moving around in the community, you must set an example and follow social distancing measures so that you don't become a source of virus transmission.

- Outside your volunteering activities, avoid going to all non-essential public places where you could be near other people
- Avoid travel to other regions
- Avoid gatherings
- Wash your hands often
- Don't take public transit during rush hour

Start with people around you

If you know people who are in home isolation (older neighbours, parents, grandparents, friends, etc.), make yourself available to help.

- Identify one or a few people whom you can contact every day.
- Call them every day to ask how they're doing.
- Go shopping for them, making sure you follow all the above instructions.

Watch for symptoms and take your temperature every day

If you develop any of the following symptoms, **stop all support activities, isolate yourself** and call 514-644-4545



- Fever (even mild, that is, 100.4 °F/38 °C or higher)

- Cough



- Unusual fatigue

- Any symptom that resembles those of a cold or flu (headaches, runny nose, sore throat, muscle ache)

Don't share personal objects



Don't share your keys, phone, plates, utensils, glasses, clothes or anything else with other people.

Don't wear a mask

Despite what you may believe, it is not recommended to wear a mask to avoid getting COVID-19. There are many reasons for this:

- Masks are for people with symptoms and their caregivers.
- There is NO evidence that masks help prevent the disease.
- Masks provide a FALSE sense of security, and people pay less attention to other, more important, protective measures.
- People who wear masks tend to touch their faces more often, which contributes to contamination and makes them at greater risk of getting the disease.
- Masks can only be worn once, so you risk wasting one for nothing. There is a shortage of masks around the world, and authorities are asking people to use them wisely.



What to do if you come across people in distress

You may cross people who are anxious, angry or sad. Each one of us reacts differently. People you meet may tell you they

- aren't sleeping well or can't relax
- cry often and are very worried, or feel panicked
- want to isolate themselves even more, have difficulty communicating
- blame others for the situation
- have thoughts constantly swirling around in their heads
- have a hard time accepting help
- can't take care of their kids anymore
- don't enjoy anything anymore

If you notice that **someone is in distress, remember that it's not up to you to take care of it.**

Encourage the person to seek specialized help:

- Psychosocial help line **Info-Social 8-1-1**
- Suicide prevention: **1-866-APPELLE** (277-3553)
- **2-1-1** information and referral service that can direct the person to other, more specific resources
- **Tel-Aide help line:** 514-935-1101
- **Tel-Écoute help line:** 514-493-4484 or **Tel Aîné help line:** 514-353-2463



If you're cooking meals for other people

Don't cook dishes at home if they're for other people.

If you want to help, Meals on Wheels and other organizations have safe facilities that meet current hygiene measures.

The Government of Québec is working with the Fédération des Centres d'action bénévole du Québec on a [one-stop service](#) that will coordinate the needs of organizations and citizens who wish to volunteer.



If you deliver meals, groceries, medications, etc.

If possible, leave the items outside. Knock on the door and ask the person to pick up the items once you've backed away at least two metres.

If the person lives in an apartment building, call on the intercom and wait at a distance until the person gets downstairs so you can make sure the person has received the items.

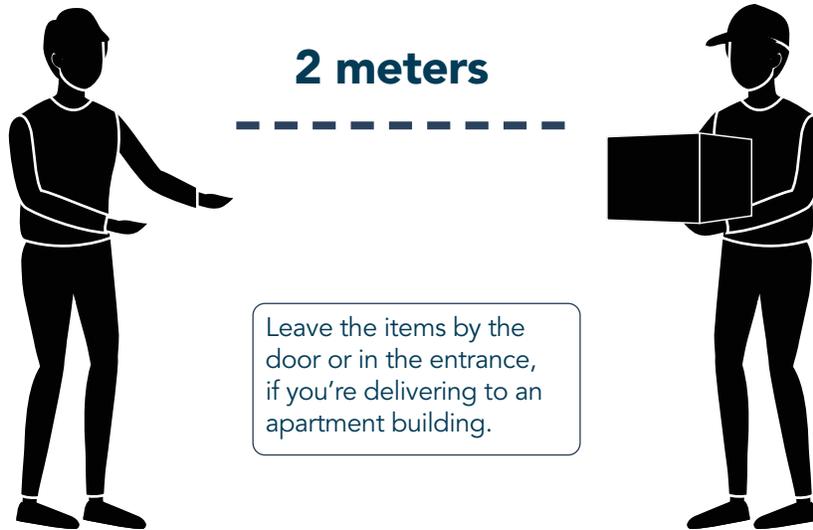
If you need to check in on someone, do it over the phone or through a window. You can ask the person for his or her phone number so you can call later, if the person wants to talk to break their boredom, for example.

At this time, there is no scientific evidence that COVID-19 can spread through food. However, if you prefer that people getting the food delivery wash the products they receive, you can give them the following information either as a written memo, over the phone or through the window or door:



- Wash all fruits, vegetables and packaging well.
- Separate raw foods from cooked foods.
- Wash surfaces on which food is prepared, such as the counter.
- If you can't wash the packaging (e.g. cardboard box), empty the contents into another container and throw out the packaging.
- **Most important of all: wash your hands right after.**

Notify the person that everything that was delivered must be disinfected (packaging, fruits and vegetables, medication boxes, etc.)



After each delivery, you must also:

1. Wash your hands or disinfect them with an antiseptic gel.
2. Clean and disinfect all surfaces often touched on your bicycle or car (handles, steering wheel, etc.).

If you're buying things for other people

If you go to a grocery store, pharmacy or other store to shop for someone else, take the following precautions:

- Avoid peak hours.
- Avoid public transit; use a car or bicycle, or walk.
- Put the items in your trunk or a bag/basket reserved for this purpose.
- Keep the items you have bought apart from your personal effects (separate bags or containers).
- Wash or disinfect your hands right before going into the store and just after you leave.
- If you're delivering products, follow the instructions for delivery, on page 4.

Insofar as possible, don't exchange cash (bills, change) with the person to whom you are delivering something. Don't take credit cards in your hands. If the person can do an Interac e-transfer, that's ideal. If the person must pay cash:

- put the money in a bag or box specifically used for this purpose and wash or disinfect your hands right after;
- some people may be afraid that they may be dealing with a fraudster. Give the person your full name and, if possible, the name of the group you're working with. You can also suggest that payment be made after delivery.

Most support groups have also given guidelines to their volunteers related to handling cash. Follow those guidelines.

If you're working with spreading information such as putting up posters or handing out information leaflets

Even if you don't come across anyone, please take protective measures:

- Wash your hands often, and always have with you a hand sanitizer or disinfectant containing at least 70% alcohol.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth with your hands.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow.
- Always keep a distance of 2 metres from other people.
- If you're delivering information from house to house, leave it in the mailbox. DON'T try to come into direct contact with people.



Take protective measures when you get back home

- Think about setting up a space to use as a transition area between outside and inside your home.
- Wash your hands.
- Clean objects that you touched while you were doing volunteer work: keys, phone, wallet, etc.
- Clean your home at least once a day, especially things that are touched often (e.g. light switches, doorknobs).
- Think about your day and tell yourself that you contributed to a collective effort to help people most in need during this period of COVID-19!

Beware of recipes for homemade disinfectants

Dozens of recipes for homemade disinfectants are circulating on social networks.

The best way to kill the virus is to wash your hands with soap and running water. If you don't have access to running water and soap, use a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.

To disinfect surfaces, you can also prepare a solution with 1 part bleach (5%) and 9 parts cold water (e.g. 1 cup bleach and 9 cups of water). The solution must be prepared each day, because the chlorine content evaporates and the solution loses its disinfectant properties.

Visit our Website at santemontreal.ca/en/coronavirus



Sample memo for food delivery

Hello,

My name is _____ .

I live in your neighbourhood and I'm with the _____
community support group

At this time, there is no scientific proof that COVID-19 can spread through food. However, if you'd rather take additional precautions, here are the instructions for the products I'm bringing you:

- Wash all fruits, vegetables and packaging.
- Separate raw foods from cooked foods.
- Wash surfaces on which food is prepared, like your counter.
- If you can't wash the packaging (e.g. cardboard box), you can empty the contents into another container and throw out the packaging.
- The most important thing is to wash your hands. Take care of yourself!

(your name)