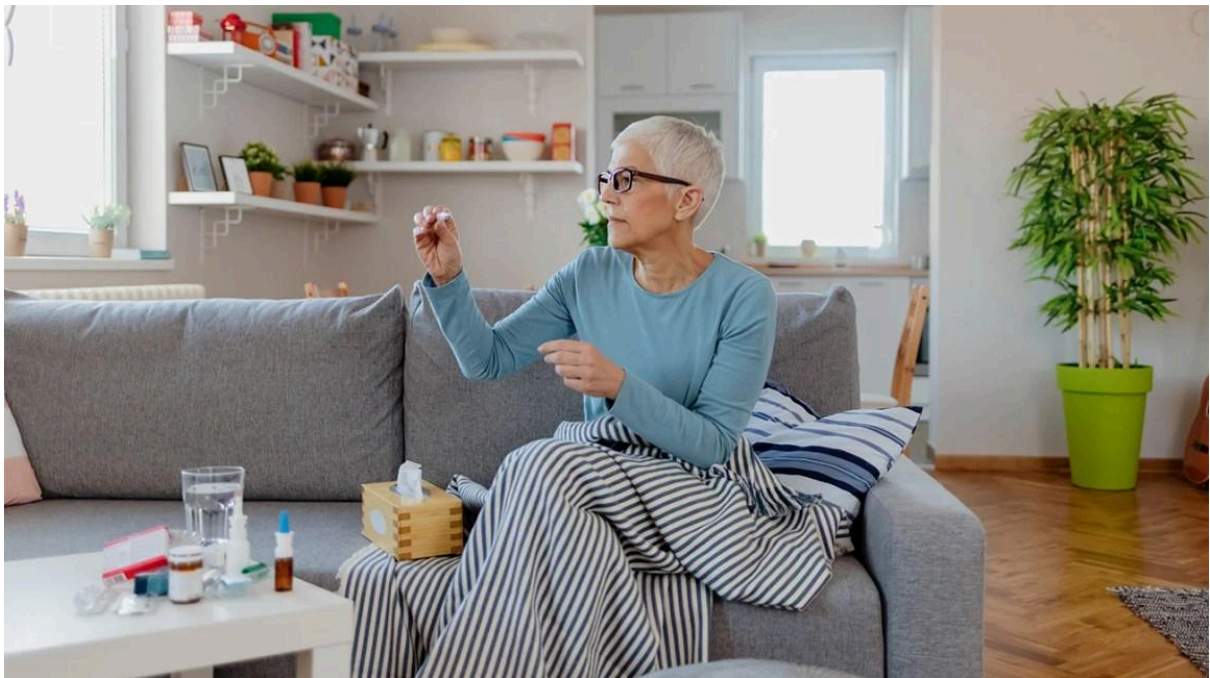


What Experts Say You Can Do to Treat Yourself at Home If You Have a Mild Case of COVID-19



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Experts say it's not just groceries to keep on hand. You should also have medical and cleaning supplies as well as other items. Getty Images

- Experts say there are a number of supplies you can buy now to prepare to care for yourself at home if you have mild symptoms of COVID-19, including the new Omicron variant.

- Among your grocery items should be fresh fruits and vegetables as well as canned goods with long shelf lives.
- Among the medical supplies should be a thermometer, cough medicines, tissues, zinc, and vitamin C.
- Cleaning products as well as extra sheets, towels, and pajamas should also be on hand.

Have you thought about what you'll need to have on hand if you develop COVID-19 and need to self-quarantine?

With the arrival of highly infectious variants of COVID-19, such as Delta and Omicron, the odds of contracting the coronavirus have increased, even for people who are fully vaccinated.

Vaccines will still prevent most people from getting seriously ill with COVID-19. However, even a mild case of COVID-19 means you'll need to self-quarantine in order to prevent transmitting the virus to friends, family, and others in your community.

Early reports about the Omicron variant, which has quickly become the most dominant strain of the coronavirus in the United States, suggest that it generally causes less severe symptoms than previous variants.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, an estimated 80 percent

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of those with COVID-19 experience only mild to moderate symptoms.

That means that most people can recover at home.

But you'll need to be prepared for an extended period of isolation: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

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recommends that people who are sick and think or know they have COVID-19 isolate themselves for at least 10 days after symptoms appear. People should also stay quarantined until symptoms end, including at least 24 hours after any fever subsides.

Create an action plan

There are simple steps you can take to help prepare for the possibility that you may develop COVID-19, or to aid in your recovery if you've already tested positive and start to feel mild to moderately symptomatic, Jennifer Williams, MPH, a research scientist and hydration expert at the medical device and consumer products company Abbott, told [name removed].

"Preparing for a period of home quarantine means making a household plan of action as well as stocking supplies for the duration of the isolation period," Dr. Lisa Ide, chief medical officer of the national virtual health platform Zipnosis, told [name removed].

“Make sure that you have a list of emergency contacts, a plan to communicate with family, friends, and co-workers, and know how to get food delivered if possible,” she said.

“Organize a 2- to 4-week supply of food, cleaning materials such as sanitizing wipes and soap, and basic household staples such as toilet paper and facial tissue,” suggested Ide.

“When you are planning your food supplies, think of food that will store well and be nutritious such as rice, pasta, canned or dried beans, dried fruit, soups, and frozen vegetables as well as pet food,” she said.

Fresh fruit and vegetables are also important for health and healing.

“Fruit and vegetables provide loads of essential nutrients, and there are ways to extend their shelf-life and make them more convenient,” notes the website Huel, which markets nutritionally complete food with a 12-month shelf life. “For example, soups and sauces can be made straight away and then frozen. You can make a concentrated stock which you can then freeze in ice cube trays and, voila, homemade, low salt stock cubes.”

Here’s a shopping list

Other critical supplies to have on hand as you recover from COVID-19 include the following:

Clean water

Water should be at the top of the list of supplies you'll need in the event you develop COVID-19.

"COVID-19 is a viral infection and like most viral infections, treatment is all about comfort and keeping well enough while your body heals," Dr. Roy Benaroch, a clinical assistant professor of pediatrics at Emory University and a pediatrician with a private practice in Roswell, Georgia, told [name removed].

"It's crucial to stay hydrated, so plenty of fluids, especially if the fever is high," Benaroch said.

Williams said that common COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, coughing, diarrhea, and vomiting "can easily impact individuals' fluid intake and contribute to dehydration, and rob the body of key nutrients if healthy foods and fluids are not consumed while recovering."

"Healthy hydration levels can help your nose by maintaining that the mucous membrane is intact," she added. "This could help decrease nasal irritation when coughing, sneezing, and even just breathing. Moisture also helps heal broken membranes so additional bacteria don't get into the body."

In most instances, tap or bottled water is fine. If you're relying on bottled water, experts recommend keeping at least a 15-day supply on hand.

“If you cannot drink your tap water at home safely or if you have a sink that is shared communally by any other people in your home, it’s best to have bottled water that you could keep by your bedside and drink when needed,” Dr. Shirin Peters, medical director of the Bethany Medical Clinic in New York, told [name removed].

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine defines adequate daily fluid intake as 15.5 cups (3.7 liters) of fluids for men and 11.5 cups (2.7 liters) of fluids a day for women, although people who are sick likely should drink more. About 20 percent of this fluid intake comes from foods.

In the minority of cases where COVID-19 symptoms include acute gastroenteritis, solutions such as Pedialyte can help prevent dehydration. Sports drinks like Gatorade are another option.

Pain medication

“The most useful medicine is something to decrease headaches, body aches, and fever, like acetaminophen (Tylenol),” said Benaroch.

“Many people also use ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), but there has been some concern, especially from Europe, that ibuprofen is less safe, though there’s no direct evidence that this is true. Still, if you want to be extra careful, use acetaminophen instead,” he said.

Dr. Larry Burchett, a California emergency physician, recommends 650 milligrams (mg) of acetaminophen every 4 to 6 hours as a safe dosage for most adults.

“Some of the methods of treatment in the case of a high or low fever that is causing discomfort include cooling blankets, ice packs, and over-the-counter medications [taken according to package directions],” Dr. Joshua Mansour, a clinical oncologist with the Southern California Permanente Medical Group, told [name removed].

“Rest and recovery, as well as staying cool, are very important,” he added.

Tissues

Viral droplets spread by coughing, sneezing, or spitting is one of the primary ways that COVID-19 spreads from person to person.

Have plenty of tissues on hand to help prevent transmitting the coronavirus to other people.

Cough medicine

The most commonly reported symptoms of infection with the Omicron variant of the coronavirus are cough, fatigue, and congestion or runny nose, according to the CDC

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“Many people with COVID-19 have a strong cough,” said Benaroch. “If you have asthma or any other respiratory condition, it’s essential that you continue to take your routine respiratory medicines and follow your asthma action plan or any similar instructions from your doctor for the use of rescue medications.”

Over-the-counter (OTC) cough medicines aren’t effective, said Benaroch, but can be tried. Honey — or cough drops containing honey — may also help soothe coughs.

Like COVID-19, the common cold is a type of coronavirus, which is why they share some common symptoms like congestion and runny nose. These symptoms can be treated with some of the same medications you’d use if you had a cold, such as drugs containing pseudoephedrine phenylephrine for a stuffy nose and diphenhydramine for a runny nose.

Prescription medications

If you have asthma or another respiratory illness, be sure to have extra inhalers and other medications on hand.

The same is true of any other chronic illnesses you may have, since having conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and immune system disorders place you at higher risk of serious complications from COVID-19.

“Ensure that you have a 4-week supply of prescription and over-the-counter medicine,” said Peters. “And while you are stocking up and preparing, please check in with neighbors who are elderly or need extra help.”

Zinc

“Zinc has become one of the most popular suggestions for reducing symptoms of coronavirus,” Dr. Morton Tavel, clinical professor emeritus of medicine at the Indiana University School of Medicine, told [name removed].

“Although there is no direct evidence at this time to suggest that using zinc lozenges can prevent or treat COVID-19 in people, zinc does have antiviral properties and was shown in a laboratory study to inhibit the replication of coronaviruses in cells,” he said.

Tavel recommends taking Cold-Eeze lozenges, an OTC medication containing zinc gluconate, several times a day for upper respiratory symptoms.

“Since there is little harm in such a strategy, it may be worth a try,” he said.

Vitamin C

“It supports the activity of our immune cells, especially when they work more than they should during outbreaks,” said Asli Elif Tanugur Samanci, a food scientist and chief executive officer of Bee & You. “I would recommend 1 to 3 grams a day, on top of a healthy diet that’s rich in fresh vegetables and fruit.”

Herbal remedies like turmeric and ginger

“They both have incredible anti-inflammatory properties and also very high in antioxidants,” said Samanci.

“Further, ginger is full of chemicals that fight off cold and relieves stomach-related problems. Turmeric also has hundreds of active chemicals and is a great pain reliever,” Samanci said. “You can either add them fresh or juice them to get the full spectrum of benefits.”

A thermometer

If you suspect you have a mild case of COVID-19, you’ll need a thermometer to check your temperature twice a day, since being fever-free is one of the requirements for ending self-quarantine.

If your symptoms get worse, call a healthcare professional.

Household cleaning and sanitizing products

Gloves, soap, hand sanitizer, surface-cleaning products, mops, and sponges will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your household.

Extra sheets, towels, and pajamas

“When you are sick, you can contaminate all the surfaces you come into contact with,” said Peters. “Hard surfaces can be disinfected, but clothing, sheets, and towels will need to be stored safely and laundered on a hot wash cycle before using them again.”

A place to self-isolate

If you’re sick, you need to stay in a single, separate room away from other people as much as possible. Ideally, choose a room with a separate bathroom.

A first aid kit

With COVID-19 straining healthcare resources, it’s important to have supplies on hand to treat minor injuries at home.

Games, movies, books, and other entertainment options

“It’s important that you also take care of your mental health during self-isolation,” said Dr. Jonas Nilsen, co-founder of Practio, a travel vaccination and infectious disease consulting company.

The number of a local healthcare professional and emergency room

“It is important to remember that if a fever remains very high, or if a patient’s symptoms are causing discomfort, that they should contact a healthcare professional for further advice on the next step,” said Mansour.