



National Indian Health Board  
**NATIONAL TRIBAL  
COVID-19 RESPONSE**

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## **Tips for Health and Wellness for Elders**

As an Elder you are a respected and treasured member of your community. Maintaining your community role as a Tribal elder can be challenging in these times. As knowledge keepers it is also a time vital to preserving and sharing the stories and traditions of your Tribe. We hope this information is helpful to you to live a healthy, balanced life.

### **Continue to share your wisdom**

Consider ways to fulfill your responsibilities that do not jeopardize your safety, such as using a phone. If you have to be physically present, be sure to wear a face mask and do your best to stay six feet away from other people at all times.

### **What can elders do to stay healthy?**

- **Take special care to follow prevention guidance:** washing hands frequently for 20 seconds, avoiding physical contact with people you do not live with, staying at home as much as possible, and carefully monitoring for symptoms.
- **Contact your healthcare provider immediately** if you develop symptoms, including a fever or trouble breathing. They may advise you to come to a medical facility.
  - Before this happens, make a plan with family members or your Tribe's public health workforce to make sure you have a way to get to the health center or provider's office if you need to!
- **Develop a plan or routine for each day.** Many elders can feel isolated or lonely even in the best of times, and making friends and family members stay away can be very



### **Why are Elders at Higher Risk?**

Older people are more likely to have serious COVID-19 illness if they contract the disease. This may be because immune systems change with age, making it harder to fight off diseases and infection.

Older adults also are more likely to have underlying health conditions, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, that make it harder to cope with and recover from illness.



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challenging for mental well-being. Include mental and physical activities in your daily routine.

- **Stay connected to family and friends – from a distance!** Call or video chat with loved ones and friends instead of gathering. Write letters or send cards.
- **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening the news.** Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting. Instead, consider activities that help you feel relaxed, like spending time outdoors, singing or listening to music.
- **Eat balanced meals, exercise at home, get enough sleep, and maintain your spiritual health.** Engage in activities that help you care for yourself (mentally and physically) while limiting risk of exposure. Consider home workout videos, or attending a religious service virtually.
- **Be mindful of feelings of stress, worry, and anxiety.** Reach out to support if you or someone you care about are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself.
  - If it feels life-threatening, call 911.
  - Call your Tribal behavioral health center or healthcare provider.
  - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517)

### **Caring for Young Ones**

If you are an elder caring for a young person, be sure to check with your Tribe to see if there are services available to you!

- Several Tribes are putting together food drives so that elders can avoid going to crowded stores
- Check out the National Indian Health Board's [Tips for Talking to Youth About COVID](#) if your youngster is struggling to understand what is going on.
- Remember to monitor yourself and your young one for symptoms of COVID-19
  - Symptoms may include **fever, cough, trouble breathing, headache, chills, shaking with chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or a sudden loss in smell or taste.**
- Contact your health care provider if these symptoms are present!