

How to offer help to the elderly people in your family during the coronavirus pandemic?

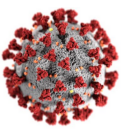
Why do the elderly need help? They are an at-risk group.

Elderly citizens are among those who **have the highest risk of having a severe case of COVID-19**. Immune-compromised people, people with chronic cardiovascular disease, diabetes and asthma are also among those most endangered by coronavirus. **Some elderly people may belong to more at-risk groups at the same time.**

It is, therefore, important for **the elderly to abide by all the recommendations and measures and, if possible, not to leave their homes**. At the same time, however, **they of course need things like food and medications**. The fact that they must stay at home is **also difficult for their mental health**.

How to help the elderly in your family?

Many of us have **elderly family members whom we can offer help** during this difficult time. For example, we can **bring them their shopping or pick up their medicine and leave it by the door**. If you live too far away or you are chronically ill yourself, **you can connect the elderly person with someone who offers help in their place of residence**. You can **also help them by talking to them** – for example on the phone or via email.



How to offer your help?

Be the one to offer help on your own initiative

It is important for the mental well-being of the elderly to be as **self-sufficient** as possible, even in a really old age. Restriction of their independence can be unpleasant and dangerous for them. That's why **it can be hard for them to ask for help**.

Try to make it easier for them by offering your help.

- The elderly person may **be afraid that they are bothering you**.
- Some **may not feel self-sufficient**.
- It **can be humiliating** for an elderly person **to be dependent on the help of others**.
- The elderly person may **expect you to offer help** and not to have to "beg you".

Choose your words carefully – don't patronize and don't forbid them to do things

Beware of forbidding and patronizing – rather, make offers to them. You may think that the elderly person is behaving irresponsibly; however, **you will not persuade them by patronizing them or speaking to them as if they were children. Quite the contrary – it is humiliating for them, they lose their trust in you and may start to oppose you.**

Show interest in the elderly person's opinion → don't assume that you know what they need

- "I am going to the shop now. Can I get something for you and leave the bag by the door? What do you need me to get for you?"

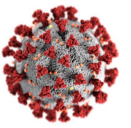
Show them that you were happy to help

Mention that you are glad that the elderly person let you help them. You will clearly **show them your interest and prevent them from being afraid that they are bothering you.** You picking up their medicine, bringing their shopping or calling them regularly **will not only help the elderly person but also yourself** – you will be sure that they have everything they need and aren't needlessly exposing themselves to danger. **Don't be afraid to admit this.**

- "I am glad that we are calling each other more often now."
- "I am also way calmer when I know that you have your shopping for the next few days."
- "I am glad that you let me pick up your medicine."
- "Being able to do something for you makes me happy."

This leaflet was created by postgraduate students as part of the curriculum at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, under the supervision of Zuzana Masopustová, Ph.D., and it is meant to be widely distributed free of charge.

Authors: Jana Fikrlová, Tereza Kašková.



How to offer your help?

Offer them that they can get in touch with you

Try to **remind the elderly person that they can call you or write to you** whenever they want.

- **“If you need something, feel free to call me.”**
- **“If you ever want to have a chat, you can call me or send a text message.”**



You can also **mention free phone lines** which the elderly person can call in case they are afraid or need information.

Create a routine

Try to **create a routine and don't settle for one-time help**. You can, for example, offer to the elderly person that you will call them every day at the same time, or you will bring their shopping regularly. **Don't forget to ask them what they feel comfortable with**. The situation may occur where more family members have offered their help or where the elderly person prefers to have a phone conversation with you every other day.

- **“I have an idea that I could call you every day at five p.m. when I get home from work. Is this all right for you?”**
- **“I can bring you your shopping regularly. Which days do you prefer?”**

Don't get discouraged

The elderly person **may not be as excited by your offer as you expected**. Be prepared for the possibility that **they may refuse it**. **That doesn't mean that you have to give up trying**.

- **“I will still be more at ease if we call each other tomorrow.”**
- **“I would be happy if I could bring you your shopping.”**
- **“If you change your mind, please call or text me.”**
- **Alternately, try to offer your help again in a few days.**

<https://psych.fss.muni.cz/en/coronavirus>

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