

**COVID-19:
Taking Care While You Are
in the Hospital**

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COVID-19: Taking Care While You Are in the Hospital

What is COVID-19 (SARS-CoV2)?

- COVID-19 a type of coronavirus. **Coronaviruses** are a large family of viruses that usually cause mild to moderate upper respiratory (parts of your body that help you breathe, like your nose, sinuses, and throat) sickness.
- Viruses always mutate (change). These changed viruses are called **variants**. The Canadian government is watching several variants closely. A variant is a concern when it affects:
 - › How the disease is spread
 - › Disease severity (how sick it makes people)
 - › How well tests used to detect (find) the virus work
 - › How well vaccines and treatments work

How does COVID-19 spread?

- COVID-19 spreads from an infected person to other people through respiratory droplets or aerosols (spray). These are created when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, shouts, or talks.
- Droplets may come in direct contact with a person's mucous membranes (nose, mouth, or eyes), or they may be inhaled (breathed in) through the nose or mouth.
- COVID-19 may also spread when a person touches something that has the virus on it, and then touches their nose, mouth, or eyes before washing their hands.
- **A person who does not have signs or symptoms of infection (called asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic) can still spread the virus to other people.**

COVID-19 Report and Support Screening form

You or your family member can fill out the COVID-19 Report and Support online form if:

- › You have been tested for COVID-19 and are waiting for your results.
- › You have symptoms.
- › You have tested positive on a PCR test or a rapid test.

If you are able to take COVID-19 medication while you are in the hospital, this form is the quickest way for our pharmacy team to complete an assessment for you.

Scan the QR code on your smartphone (open your camera on your smartphone, point the camera at the code, and tap the banner or border that appears) or visit:

- › <https://c19hc.nshealth.ca/self-report/>



What can I expect while I am admitted with COVID-19?

- A member of the health care team will give you a physical exam when you arrive on the unit, and will check in with you each day.
- When you are first admitted, we will watch your vital signs (like heart rate, breathing, temperature, blood pressure) often. As your symptoms get better, we may check them less often.
- The health care team will monitor your oxygen (O₂) saturation level. This is done using a pulse oximeter that is placed on your finger.
- During your stay, we will take blood samples often. These samples will help the doctor treat your symptoms.
- To lower the risk of being exposed to COVID-19, your health care team will only come into your room to give you care when needed. We encourage you to do as much for yourself as possible.
- Before any member of your health care team enters your room, put on your surgical mask (given to you when you arrived at the hospital).
- If you need a new mask, ask any member of your health care team.

- If you need to cough or sneeze while a member of your health care team is in your room:
 - › Please cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue.
- AND
- › Wash or sanitize your hands.
- If you need help, press the call bell at your bedside.
- Your health care team will ask you to lay on your stomach (belly) if you are able to. This is called “self-proning”. See page 4 for instructions.
- You may be asked to move as little as possible. The health care team will help you and tell you how to do this.
- After food is delivered to your room, it cannot be re-heated in the unit’s microwave. This is to keep everyone safe and lower the risk of being exposed to COVID-19.

It is possible that you could be transferred to another hospital. Your health care team will decide if a transfer is safe for you.

Personal belongings

You are allowed to bring personal belongings into the hospital when you are admitted. If you are admitted into the hospital after having gone to the Emergency Department, your loved one(s) can drop off your personal belongings.

Visitor restrictions

- **To lower the spread of COVID-19, people admitted to any Nova Scotia Health site may not be allowed to have visitors.**
 - › We may have iPads you can use to FaceTime your loved ones. Please ask a member of your health care team if there is an iPad available.
 - › You may also use your own personal device to contact your loved ones.
- For more information, please read *Frequently Asked Questions Family Presence During COVID-19*:
 - › https://policy.nshealth.ca/Site_Published/covid19/document_render.aspx?documentRender.IdType=6&documentRender.GenericField=&documentRender.Id=85626

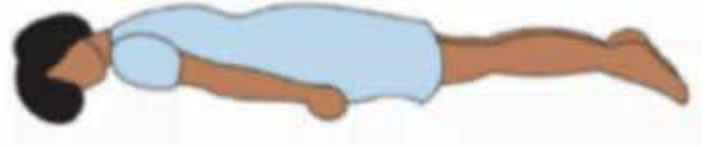
Self-proning: Instructions for patients and caregivers

Lying on your stomach and changing position will help your body get air into all areas of your lungs. You may want to use pillows when lying on your side.

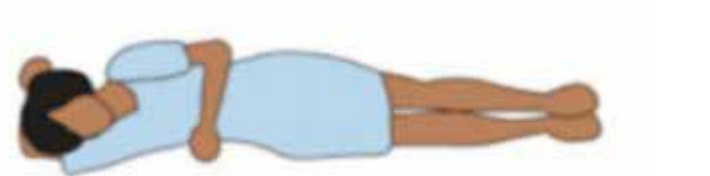
Try to change your position every 30 minutes to 2 hours.

Sitting up is better than lying on your back. If you are able, please try:

1. For 30 minutes up to 2 hours, lay on your belly.



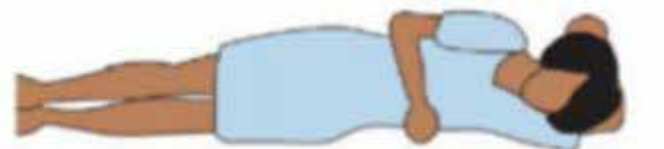
2. For 30 minutes up to 2 hours, lay on your right side.



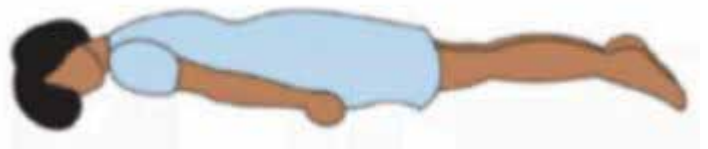
3. For 30 minutes up to 2 hours, sit up either in bed or in a chair.



4. For 30 minutes up to 2 hours, lay on your left side.



5. Repeat steps 1 to 4.



Instead of steps 2 or 4:

- › Lie on one side. Use pillows to support your legs, hips, back, and chest

Instead of completely doing step 1:

- › Lie on one side. Use pillows to slightly support your leg, hip, neck, and arm.

What should I eat and drink as I recover from COVID-19?

- It is important to get enough liquids and food as you recover from COVID-19. Losing weight when you are sick can make you lose muscle and liquids.
- COVID-19 can also cause you to lose your senses of smell and taste. Try to follow the guidelines below even if you do not feel like eating or drinking.

Liquids

- Drink plenty of liquids to help make your lung secretions (mucus) thin. This will make it easier to clear your lungs when you cough.
- **Drink at least 60 to 120 ml (2 to 4 ounces) of liquid every 15 minutes.** Take small sips every few minutes if you cannot drink large amounts at one time. Keep liquids by your bedside at all times.
- Choose smoothies, milkshakes, soups, popsicles, or oral (by mouth) liquid supplements (also called meal replacements). **If you are only drinking and not eating solid food, make sure you are drinking enough.**
- Drink liquids other than water, as they can give you more calories and protein. Examples include:
 - › Juice
 - › Cow's milk
 - › Soy milk
 - › Almond milk
 - › Smoothies
 - › Milkshakes
 - › Ensure[®], Boost[®], or other store brand oral liquid supplements
- Most people will need 5 to 6 bottles of liquid supplements each day to meet their nutritional needs, plus an extra 2 bottles a day to meet their recovery needs.
- If you find the liquid supplements too sweet, add a pinch of salt to the bottle. You can also try it mixed with milk over ice, or frozen in a cup and eaten like ice cream.
- Limit liquids with caffeine (like coffee, tea, dark pop).
- Dehydration (not having enough liquids) can happen if you do not drink enough. Signs of dehydration include:
 - › Thirst
 - › Headache
 - › Feeling tired
 - › Constipation (not able to poop)
 - › Making less urine (pee)
 - › Urinating (peeing) less each day
 - › Dark yellow urine (urine should be pale yellow)
 - › Dry mouth
 - › Dizziness
 - › Feeling cranky or grumpy
 - › Cracked lips

Food

- As you recover, eat foods with extra protein and calories for at least 4 weeks (1 month).
- Your body needs an extra 30 grams of protein each day. You will need an extra 400 to 500 calories each day.
- **Eat even if you are not hungry.** Try to eat 6 times a day, every 2 to 3 hours. Eat snacks between meals.
- Eat the high protein, higher calorie parts of your meal first (like meat, fish, poultry, eggs, beans, and/or nuts). Eat the lower calorie parts of your meal last (like salad, vegetables, or fruit).
- Eat what you can first, then try to drink a liquid supplement after your meal.

For more information on recovery:

- Scan the QR code on your smartphone (see instructions on page 2) or visit:
 - › www.MyCOVIDRecoveryNS.ca



My COVID Recovery: 3 Month Post-COVID Symptoms Survey

This survey will help us learn more about your recovery at least 3 months after your COVID-19 infection. We will use the information you share in the survey to help connect you to supports to manage your symptoms.

- To complete the survey, scan the QR code on your smartphone or visit:
 - › <https://quality-improvement.nshealth.ca/surveys/?s=3CPJKFAPLP>



Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <https://library.nshealth.ca/PatientEducation>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

Nova Scotia Health promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.

Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!

www.nshealth.ca

Prepared by: IPPL, adapted from *Welcome to the COVID-19 Inpatient Unit (Unit 8.3)*, Acute Care and Critical Care

Illustrations by: Jiang, L. G., et al. (2020). Figure 1. Conscious prone: An introduction of a proning protocol for nonintubated, awake, hypoxic emergency department COVID-19 patients. *Academic Emergency Medicine*, 27(7), 566–569. <https://doi.org/10.1111/acem.14035>;

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.
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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.