

# What will happen to my loved one who is seriously ill in hospital with COVID-19?

Everyone is different, so it is not easy to know what will happen. Your loved one may get worse or they may recover. Here is some information to help you understand what they may be experiencing, what you might be feeling and how best to stay in touch safely. If you don't feel ready to read this information, you can return to it at any time.



## What might my loved one be experiencing?

Your loved one may be short of breath, be tired and have pain and nausea. They may be confused or be feeling worried, lonely or bored. They may have complications of their existing chronic condition if they have diabetes, hypertension or lung or heart problems.



## What is available to ease symptoms?

- If they have difficulty breathing, they will receive oxygen by mask or tubes that sit under the nose. If they struggle to breathe on their own, they may need a ventilator to help them breathe. There is no cure for COVID-19, but there is new medication that is helping those with severe COVID-19 pneumonia to improve.
- If needed, they will receive medication for pain and nausea.
- The medication may make your loved one feel drowsy or unsettled.
- Your loved one may have a drip to ensure they get enough fluids.
- They may also need treatment for their existing chronic condition.



National Hotline: 0800 029 999



Provincial Hotline: 021 928 4102



Western Cape  
Government

**STAY SAFE. SAVE LIVES.**

## Why can't I visit ?

- Hospital regulations to prevent coronavirus from spreading will not allow you to visit your loved one, even if they are seriously ill. This is very hard because comforting others in person is an important part of how we usually care for one another.
- If you had contact with your loved one in the past 14 days, you may have caught coronavirus too, even if you feel well. You need to quarantine (separate) yourself to prevent it from spreading to others.



## Will my loved one recover?

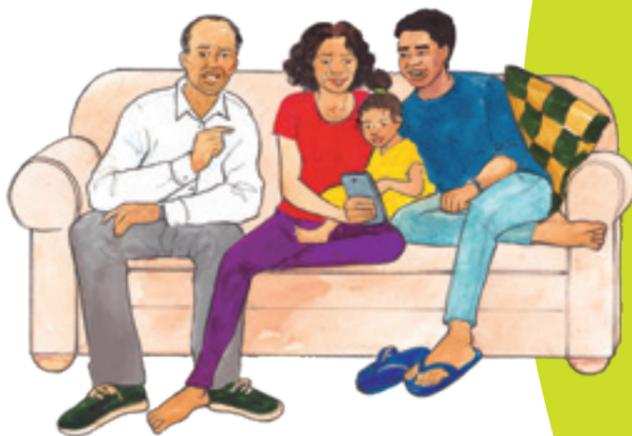
- Most people admitted to hospital for COVID-19 recover completely. Even if they deteriorate, they can get better again.
- Depending on your loved one's age and existing chronic conditions, they may be at higher risk of getting severe COVID-19 which will make it difficult to recover.
- If your loved one needs ventilator support or is too frail to cope with being on a ventilator, then there is a greater chance that they may not recover.
- If your loved one is unlikely to recover, the healthcare team will decide to give them palliative care to make sure they feel as little distress and pain as possible.
- If you are aware of any end-of-life wishes (like not wanting to be on life support), make sure you inform your loved one's healthcare workers.

## What can I do ?

It will be difficult to be supportive when you cannot be with your loved one. You should now focus on how best to support them under the circumstances.

Communicate via phone or video call with your loved one:

- If your loved one is unable to arrange this, schedule a time with hospital staff.
- Make sure you have enough data for a Whatsapp call.
- You might want to get several family members together for the call.
- Even if your loved one does not respond, continue to speak, as they may hear you. Your words and familiar voice will be comforting.



**Dealing with uncertainty and worry will be very challenging. Please be patient with the healthcare workers caring for your loved one: they are very busy and it is hard for them to know for sure whether your relative will recover or not.**

