

Some ideas on things seniors can do to reduce the chance of being infected with the coronavirus, along with many things neighbors, friends, family and even strangers can do to make isolation bearable for them

Here are 21 ideas.

If you want to help those at risk

If you hoarded, make it right. If you over-purchased basics like toilet paper and canned goods at the beginning of the crisis, donate some of it to a senior center or food bank so those who are vulnerable can get some. Give some to a neighbor who can't go out, as well.

Offer to be a text, phone or errand buddy. Look around your neighborhood for those who are vulnerable, then leave a note on the door. "I can pick up groceries." "We can text or talk on the phone."

Offer to disinfect the kitchen and hard surfaces in other often-used areas. For hard surfaces, where possible, use one part bleach with nine parts water, per CDC guidelines.

Take the canine pals for a walk for those who can't.

Be a "caremonger." In a world that seems suddenly scary, Ask a few friends to join you in these acts of kindness. You can create your own version by joining with others in your neighborhood to reach out to the vulnerable. Just remember to keep a physical distance and practice good hygiene.

Use technology to be "together." Isolation is going to create loneliness for some elderly people. January said to set up smartphones so the older person can Facetime, Skype or do other video calling. You can have contact that's virtual, not risky.

Help someone in isolation find interesting things online. Find a site online that provides virtual tours of museums etc. <https://www.abc10.com/.../103-3b3be900-2956-4ac3-88e3-43ec288...>

Help them cultivate interests or find new ones. Being stuck inside is a good time to learn a new craft or skill or figure out something they may have been interested in but never had time to explore.

Buy the person an audiobook or podcast subscription. Some may need help navigating them at first.

Call regularly to check in, but also make time just to chat.

Run errands, but consolidate to limit everyone's exposure. Everyone, not just older people, should be staying away from others as much as possible. So pick up groceries for others who can't, but limit trips. You can leave the goods at the front door or make sure to maintain a distance when you enter a home. And sanitize before and after delivery.

Help set up grocery delivery or curbside pickup. That way, he/she can do their own shopping and be in control.

Tap into an online community. Covia.org has a "real cool resource," called Well Connected that anyone can join for free. "Whether you like art or zoology, music or meditation, there is a program for you. Each Well Connected session offers groups and classes on a wide range of topics. You're sure to find one that interests you. And Well Connected meets 365 days a year, so there's always a chance to connect," according to the website. You register so the groups stays fairly small, then dial in toll-free (some also connect via computer, tablet or mobile device).

Let them know. If you see, for example, that a local store chain is offering special hours for older people to shop, make sure elderly neighbors who insist on shopping themselves know about it. Several grocery chains are now doing that to help those who are older.

Be a contact with out-of-town relatives in case of emergency. Ask your vulnerable friends whose children aren't nearby to share your phone number with their family in case they need your help and another set of watchful eyes.

If you are vulnerable ...

Heed expert advice. The single most important thing anyone can do during this crisis is follow the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, says January. Limit public activities and stay out of crowds, especially if you're in a high-risk category.

Make a safety plan. What would you do in an emergency while you're self-isolating? Who would you call? How many supplies, from food to medicine, do you have on hand?

Skip large family gatherings like Sunday dinner. Isolate as much as possible, but if you do get together, keep it very small and practice excellent hygiene. Wash hands, cover sneezes, make sure nearby surfaces are disinfected and don't get too physically close to each other. Johns Hopkins Medicine and other health experts say to stay 6 feet or more away from others — especially the vulnerable.

Cancel nonessential doctor appointments for now.

Have a list of groups that can help. AARP says to “create a list of community and faith-based organizations that you or the people in your plan can contact in the event you lack access to information, health care services, support and resources.”

Make use of your time to record memories. If you have treasured memories and stories you haven't shared, it's a good time to record them, whether digitally or on paper.