

Urgent call to protect 7 million high-risk older US adults from COVID-19

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New research calls for more support for older adults in community settings with respiratory illnesses against COVID-19, and not just those in care homes, as around 7 million US adults fall into this category.

In a new article, published in the journal *Aging and Social Policy*, experts discuss how current methods in the US do not provide enough protection for this vulnerable group and outline specific steps to help fix the issue.

While there has been much attention on the impact of COVID-19 on the care home setting, there has been significantly less support for [older adults](#) in the community with respiratory illnesses, who are particularly vulnerable due to additional health risks and a higher mortality rate.

Additionally this group in the community is five times larger than those in nursing homes, suggesting this could become a significant issue if not dealt with correctly.

The paper suggests specific steps that can be taken to ensure the safety of this vulnerable sub-population, which are:

- Increasing testing—especially prioritize older adults with known respiratory issues for coronavirus testing
- Conducting assessments—defining who is most at risk and ensuring that appropriate precautions are taken
- Social support—providing scheduled check-ins to ensure meaningful connection
- Meet [basic needs](#)—providing essential necessities such as food and medicine
- Protect home care workers—ensuring the correct PPE is available to those that support this group

Lead author Marc Cohen Clinical Professor at University of Massachusetts Boston emphasized, "It's really important we implement measures to protect all groups of people, especially those that are more vulnerable. Policymakers, providers and other stakeholders and advocates should take note of the concrete recommendations put forward to keep this category of the population healthy in order to help

ensure their safety."

"The multi-prong approach that we are advocating here should help to ameliorate these concerns and mitigate further risk. It is incumbent on us to work together with urgency."

Further to the recommendations, the paper elaborates how the current social-distancing strategy could conversely be exacerbating other [health problems](#) because [social isolation](#) has been shown to have [negative effects](#) on health and in some cases, the impacts on be physical health are equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

More information: Marc A. Cohen et al, Who are the Most At-Risk Older Adults in the COVID-19 Era? It's Not Just Those in Nursing Homes, *Journal of Aging & Social Policy* (2020). [DOI: 10.1080/08959420.2020.1764310](#)

Provided by Taylor & Francis

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