

Is it safe to visit older loved ones as COVID-19 restrictions ease? What experts say

June 16 2020, by Tj MacIas



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Despite surges in COVID-19 numbers across the country, more and more states are reopening and relaxing stay-at-home orders—especially

during the summer, when people are vacationing or making plans to travel.

However, seniors who contract the [coronavirus](#) remain at a higher risk of developing often fatal complications and it's possible that people could carry the [virus](#) and transmit it even if they're not feeling ill, AARP says.

In a report done by the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine, it found that before the pandemic, roughly 24% of adults 65 and older who live on their own already were suffering from isolation and loneliness.

"We already had a crisis of loneliness; this pandemic has blown it wide open," Alicia Arbaje, an internist, geriatric [medicine](#) specialist and researcher at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, told AARP.

And with Father's Day approaching, the decision will be personal—and complicated.

While we want to be there for our aging parents and grandparents if they live independently or in a nursing home, is it safe to do so? Here's what experts say.

While there's no governmental guidance on when it will be safe to visit loved ones who are 65 and over, we want to do all we can to minimize the risk of exposing them to the virus, Forbes says.

Before making plans, consider the age of the loved one you want to visit and any prior health conditions they had or are currently suffering from. Do they have diabetes, [heart disease](#), or high blood pressure? These are things that loved ones need to weigh before planning a visit. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a list of guidelines you can look through when asking these questions.

"As much as possible, we should still be trying to limit contact with elders in order to keep them safest," geriatrician Christine Kistler, an associate professor of family medicine and geriatrics at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, told AARP.

Minimize Risk Of Exposing Loved Ones

According to AARP, there are different ways to minimize the risk of exposing your elderly loved ones:

Consider leaving small children behind if they won't be able to hug grandma or grandpa.

Wear [protective gear](#)—at the very minimum, a face mask. If possible, wear goggles or sunglasses, too, since it's possible to contract the virus by touching it and then touching your eyes. Gloves can also be important, especially if you're running errands for your loved one and will be touching things such as groceries.

Stay outside if it's possible. "Some [preliminary research](#) suggests that virus transmission is less likely outdoors," AARP says. "It's definitely less likely if you make a point of staying at least 6 feet or more away."

Make the visit quick. "If you're talking through a closed window, it probably doesn't matter; otherwise, the longer you're exposed to the person, the higher the risk is," Arbaje says. "About 15 minutes seems to be the cut-off point for what's considered 'prolonged exposure.'"

Take Social Distancing Seriously

What if you want to visit an older loved one, but they don't believe that COVID-19 is a "real problem?" The Guardian suggests that if someone

in your life is doing this, it's best to reiterate facts from other countries that have been affected by the virus, and that those in their 50s and over are suffering the most.

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Citation: Is it safe to visit older loved ones as COVID-19 restrictions ease? What experts say (2020, June 16) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-06-safe-older-covid-restrictions-ease.html>

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