

Guide for speaking with your loved ones and health care team about your wishes and goals if you become sick with novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

What we know about COVID-19:

- This is a new virus that appears to be easily spread by contact between people
- Affects people of all ages and acts differently than influenza

Common symptoms of COVID-19: Dry cough, shortness of breath, fever, fatigue, and muscle aches, sore throat, headaches nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, runny nose, change in smell and taste

Treatments for COVID-19:

- There is no current cure to treat the COVID-19 virus, but there are treatments to help manage symptoms while your body tries to heal and recover
- Treatments for your symptoms can be given anywhere (home, lodges, nursing homes, hospitals)

Risk factors for severe illness and death from COVID-19:

- Existing health conditions: High blood pressure, diabetes, heart problems, chronic lung problems, cancer, history of stroke

Outcomes of critical illness – Intensive Care Unit (ICU)

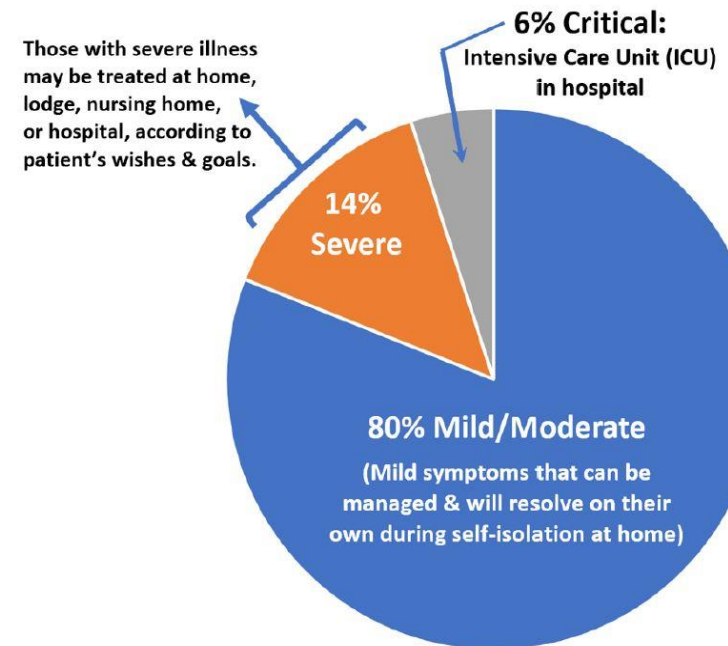
ICU outcomes from COVID-19:

- UK – one-third (1/3) of all patients who needed a breathing tube or more invasive treatments survived to leave the ICU
- China – 3-14% of all patients who needed a breathing tube survived: 38% survived being treated in the ICU overall
- We know that half of patients' age 70+ who survived treatment in the ICU (for any reason) have severe disability one (1) year later

CPR general outcomes (Prior to COVID-19):

- Only 12-16% of patients of all ages survive CPR in hospital – chest compressions if your heart stops – but over half of these people are left with memory and thinking problems from brain damage and ongoing serious health issues
- CPR is less helpful when people with chronic health conditions become very sick i.e. heart/lung problems, cancer, dementia so CPR is usually NOT recommended in these situations

Severity of Illness



Death Rates by Age

Age	> 80: 15-20%
	> 70: 8-13%
	> 60: 4%
	> 50: 1%
	10– 49: 0.2-0.4%

Talking about what is important to you, and what your priorities and wishes are, will help your loved ones and your doctor make plans for your care. Helping you guide your loved ones to speak for you if you become too sick to speak for yourself is called **Advance Care Planning**.

It can be hard to have these conversations about your health but you will be helping your loved ones make future decisions and you will also have some peace of mind knowing that you have help to make it less stressful for your loved ones.

1

Think about your present health condition. Do you have chronic health conditions such as: Diabetes, heart problems, high blood pressure, cancer, kidney problems, lung problems or history of stroke? **What is your function like? This gives you information about your overall health. Do you need help with daily activities like getting dressed, toileting, feeding or walking?** Needing help with these may point to your body not coping as well with infections.

2

Think about what's important to you in daily life and what level of health you would want to achieve. Where would you want to be taken care of if you were to get very sick from COVID-19? Be reassured that you will always receive care and treatments to control your symptoms, such as medications to treat your breathing and improve your comfort, which can be provided at any location, be it home, nursing home, lodge or hospital. Keep in mind that with COVID-19, being in the hospital can be quite stressful for patients. **What are your most important goals if your health situation worsens?** To prolong your life as long as possible? To live longer but focus on quality of life? To live the rest of your life focused on comfort in your own home?

3

Do you agree with the substitute decision-maker hierarchy? A substitute decision-maker is person speaks on your behalf if you become too sick to speak or make decisions for yourself: Is this someone you trust to make the decision that **YOU** would make, based on your values, beliefs and priorities. Is this person willing and able to support you and speak up for you and what you would want, if needed? **ASK Them!** Will this person be able to make decisions during stressful situations? If not, you will need to designate a person by completing a Power of Attorney for personal care document, available on the following websites: [Ministry of the Attorney General](#), [Speak Up Ontario](#) or [Advanced Care Planning, Palliative Care](#).

4

Talk to your substitute decision-maker, loved ones and family doctor about what you would like for your care if you were to get sick from COVID-19. Discuss what you have thought about regarding what you want if you were to get very sick from COVID-19. What is **most important to you to guide decisions** that may need to be made? **Book a visit with your regular/family doctor (by phone during these pandemic times)** to talk about your priorities and wishes.

5

Communicate your wishes, goals and beliefs to your substitute decision-maker

Check out [Advanced Care Planning](#) for more information. Additional Ontario resources can be found at [Speak Up Ontario](#).