

- Virus

Precautions to take at home when family members test positive

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Some people infected with Covid-19 and recovering from home have voiced concerns about being unable to isolate themselves at home safely. There are also worries about infecting family members while waiting for instructions from the Ministry of Health.

The Straits Times addresses some of these concerns.

Q

Am I endangering my family while recovering at home?

A Not if they are all fully vaccinated, said Professor Ooi Eng Eong from Duke-NUS Medical School's Programme in Emerging Infectious Diseases.

He said studies have found that vaccination reduces the likelihood of virus transmission within households and protects against severe illness.

Home recovery is not offered to Covid-19 cases who have household members above the age of 80, or who are pregnant, have compromised immune systems or have multiple comorbidities.

Q What precautions should I take?

A "To further reduce the likelihood of transmitting the virus to other members of the household, people with symptomatic infection can distance themselves from the rest of the family as far as possible," said Prof Ooi.

This is especially important, as coughs and sneezes from those with symptoms can expel the virus from the airway to infect others, he added.

"Standard hygiene measures, such as regular hand washing and mask wearing, remain useful to further reduce the likelihood of transmitting the virus to household members," said Prof Ooi.

Prof Teo Yik Ying, dean of the National University of Singapore's Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, said the risk of spread is much higher if toilets are shared.

To reduce this risk, cover the toilet bowl before flushing, and disinfect common surfaces such as the sink, toilet bowl and shower handles each time after the infected person uses the toilet, he said.

Prof Ooi said it would be useful to keep the toilet well-ventilated, in addition to proper hand washing and mask wearing.

Q What should I do if I start to develop symptoms?

A "If any runny nose, dry throat, cough, body aches or fever develops, please see your doctor as soon as possible," said Dr Lee Joon Loong, medical director of Paddington Medical Clinic.

Whether it is to seek treatment or get a polymerase chain reaction test, call the clinic beforehand to give the staff a heads up, he added.

Signs that symptoms are worsening include shortness of breath, chest tightness and high fever that does not get better after taking medication. Oxygen saturation readings on a pulse oximeter would also fall below 96 per cent.

Dr Lee suggests getting advice from a general practitioner first before heading to the hospital.

Q What should I do if I'm a household member of a Covid-19 case, but I wasn't issued a quarantine order?

A Prof Teo suggests strictly minimising moving about in public spaces as much as possible for at least two weeks, and to do a self-test if you have to leave the house during this time.