

## *Free Corona Virus Testing*



All Angelenos can now take a free test for the coronavirus, whether they have symptoms or not, by appointment only. For those who it may bring peace of mind, schedule your appointment

here: [https://lacovidprod.service-now.com/rrs?fbclid=IwAR1RAcg4XTIt3XLhOdphazzivH\\_qg0HIPywnB\\_U-4Hbi3L8-0fudv8kw-do](https://lacovidprod.service-now.com/rrs?fbclid=IwAR1RAcg4XTIt3XLhOdphazzivH_qg0HIPywnB_U-4Hbi3L8-0fudv8kw-do)



**Subject:** Monitoring How Sick You Are, Breathing When Sick, Assembling a Covid 19 Hospital Go-To Prep Bag

There is a lot of information about Covid-19. What's missing is practical information on what to do if you do get sick or hospitalized. There are three sections to this email, based on the experience of doctors and nurses on the front lines of Covid-care. The first is how to track how sick you really are, the second is an easy way to increase your blood oxygen level if you are sick, and the third section is an excellent set of instructions on what to pack in a prep bag if you get hospitalized.

I hope no one needs the info; chances are you or someone in your life will.

**I. Track How Sick You Actually Are** We've all been told the symptoms of Covid-19: fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue; some other symptoms are runny nose, stomach issues, loss of smell. Most people, if they get sick, will stay at home and ride it out. But the intensity of your symptoms doesn't necessarily tell you the intensity of the disease, and how sick you are. This disease is strange: people can have moderate symptoms, still be able to talk, but their blood oxygen levels indicate a serious trouble. This is because the disease attacks the air sacs (aveoli) in the lower lung, where the issue is the decrease in blood oxygen level. Compromised lower aveoli don't have many symptoms, until the pneumonia is so advanced it becomes life threatening. The shortness of breath can come on suddenly, and by that time, significant damage has been done.

The way to track how sick you actually are is to monitor your blood ox level, which you do with a little machine you can purchase over the counter, called a pulse oximeter. It's the little clip the doc puts on your finger when you go in for checkups. It measures the saturation level of oxygen in your blood. 95-100 is normal, below 90 indicates a need for oxygen. Normally a pulse ox in the high eighties would leave a person gasping for air, but not with Covid. Patients are in the 70s, and normally, they would be unconscious. But they are still upright, walking and talking. This is why how you FEEL is not as important as your blood ox level. Below 95 warrants a call to your health care provider. Below 85, and you need to call 911 or get a ride to the ER.

The good news is, if you get supplemental oxygen sooner rather than later, you are less likely to need a ventilator, and more likely to recover. So if you get ill, it might be helpful to borrow (or buy, if you can find one) a pulse oximeter.

Sources:

[Testing coronavirus with a Pulse Oximeter](#)

[Pulse Oximeters, do you need one?](#)

**II. Improve Your Breathing** If you are sick and at home. One of the difficult things about being sick with Covid 19 is how hard it can be to breathe. Not being able to breathe can make you feel panicky and stifled. Doctors have figured out that lying on your side, or on your tummy, can increase your blood oxygen level dramatically. They aren't sure why it works, but it does. And the higher your blood oxygen level is, the better your chances of overcoming the disease.

Source: [Prone is a Promising Treatment](#)

**III. Preparation Recommendations**

A friend of mine from college, whose husband is an MD in Boston, created a list of preparation recommendations that will help you, and all your loved ones, (friends and family) be prepared should you need hospital care.

The most significant point to remember is that *you will not have anyone there to speak for you*. This is a new norm that changes what preparation looks like. It is essential that you have information available for hospital staff that they can access, read and act on. If you are intubated, you will be sedated and unable to speak. Even if you are not intubated, many patients find that they cannot speak because of shortness of breath. Furthermore, the speed of decline catches many patients by surprise. So pack your hospital to-go bag now. Remember, your friends and family will not be allowed to visit, so will not be able to bring anything you forgot.

This list of preparations is extraordinarily practical, and will help you help your caretakers.

**1. Create a contact card-index card with essential information.** Write your name, DOB, and the name and number of the person who healthcare workers should contact with updates and questions. On the back, list food and drug allergies, all other medical conditions (controlled or not), and regular medications. If you take several medications, make a separate card for this.

"Laminate" the cards with clear packing tape. Punch a hole and put on a lanyard to wear around your neck at the hospital.

**\*\*Use LARGE, legible PRINT** so it can be seen by a nurse when she is looking through foggy or wavy goggles and a face shield. No cursive.

Critical Covid19 patients are struggling to breathe and low on oxygen. In this kind of situation, it's difficult to remember or relay a name and phone number. If you are on a breathing tube, it's impossible.

**2. Create an advanced directive.** You can find free forms online. Or, you can write your answers to whether you want to be intubated or resuscitated on an index card as follows:

INTUBATION: Yes or No

Resuscitation: Yes or No

If your health care provider needs to know the answers to these questions at the hospital, then time is of the essence. Creating a way to indicate your wishes if health care providers can't spend time tracking down your contacts will make sure your wishes are known and followed.

**3. Pack a very small bag** with a few items in case you are admitted for care. String backpacks are good for this; they are light and you can discard it when you get home from the hospital. Label the bag with your name in black sharpie. Include a printed copy of your medical directive (if you don't have one, create a free one online and print it.) If you have a complicated medical history, take a summary of that too. Your health care provider may not have easy access to your electronic medical record.

Use your phone to take a picture of your insurance card, and print a copy too. If you have some extra, pack several days' worth of your medications, in original bottles or in individually labelled baggies, so the nurses won't have to scramble to get the dosages you need.

Also, include a phone charging cord that is at least 6 feet long, and 2 medium sized binder clips to secure the cord to your sheets. Earphones for phone use, earplugs to help with sleeping.

Toothbrush and travel toothpaste, antiperspirant. Cozy socks or slippers for getting to the bathroom on cold tile. Unscented lotion or moisturizer for your face and hands; hairbands or

bandanas to keep your hair out of your face. Feminine products if you menstruate (you may be away from home for several weeks and the site probably doesn't have your preferred products.)

I hope no one needs any of these preparations, but it's likely someone will.

Please feel free to share this information. The more prepared you are, the easier and more effective your care will be, and the more likely you are to recover.

In health and hope,

Dr. Lisa Grant, OMD, FABORM

[www.springmountainsacupuncture.com](http://www.springmountainsacupuncture.com)

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