

# Caring For Our Older Adults through COVID-19

*By Nizette Valles, PhD, Member Fort Bend County Mental Health Task Force*

## What are the risks?

- ✚ According to the CDC, **8 out of 10** COVID-19 related deaths are adults 65 and over.
- ✚ Given the risk, individuals 65 and over are being asked to stay at home.
- ✚ Loved ones are also being asked to physically distance themselves from older adults.
- ✚ This can inadvertently lead to negative effects of social isolation in older adults, such as:
  - Increased depression and anxiety
  - Worsening medical problems
  - Increased risk for suicide

## What we can do:

Remember, we need to ***physically*** distance not ***socially*** distance from older adults.

- ✚ Make sure older adults have access to technology and know how to use it.
  - Arrange weekly virtual get-togethers (e.g., Zoom, FaceTime, FB Messenger, Google, etc.)
  - Telephone calls work too.
  - Try to talk mostly about non-COVID related topics and remind them to stay in touch with friends too.
- ✚ Encourage older adults to maintain, or establish, a regular schedule: wake time, mealtimes, activities, and bedtime.
- ✚ Encourage physically distant outdoor activities (e.g., walks) and remind them to wear a mask and hand hygiene. Also encourage them to engage in indoor exercises.
- ✚ Make sure basic needs are being met (e.g., groceries, medication, telehealth appointments)
- ✚ Stay in contact with nursing facility or personal care home.
- ✚ Encourage seniors to limit exposure to news and watch other forms of television.
- ✚ Encourage activities: arts/crafts, self-soothing activities, deep breathing, yoga, relaxation.

## Resources:

- For questions regarding your **mental health** needs please call: **281-238-3079** or visit [www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/bh](http://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/bh)
- For a list of **resources** available in Fort Bend, please visit: <https://www.sugarlandtx.gov/DocumentCenter/View/23964/COVID-Resources-for-FB-County-4720?bidId=>
- From the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (**CDC**): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html>
- For information on **Meals on Wheels** for Seniors, please visit: <https://fortbendseniors.org/>
- For information on **suicide prevention**, please visit: <https://texasuicideprevention.org/>
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: **1-800-273-8255**

