



Statement

by

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Junior Minister for Health and the Cabinet

Shielding our Vulnerable Population

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Good Morning Madam President,

Bermuda's extremely clinical vulnerable population are at higher risk than most people of getting seriously ill from getting Covid-19. They all must take extra steps to avoid getting unwell. We must do our best to protect them. Today I will discuss the important issues surrounding protecting our vulnerable population with shielding.

Shielding minimizes the interaction between those who are extremely vulnerable and others. The Government has established very clear guidance on the website coronavirus.gov.bm under Guidance entitled "Vulnerable Persons Shielding Guidance". This explains how best to shield our vulnerable population.

There are many people who make up the **Clinically Vulnerable Population** including:

- Seniors
- Persons with Heart disease
- Those with certain cancers or undergoing certain cancer treatments
- Recent bone marrow or stem cell transplant recipients
- Solid or recent transplant recipients
- Severe combined or immune deficiency
- Severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis diagnosis, severe asthma or severe COPD
- Women who are pregnant with heart disease

Please help protect our most vulnerable by responsibly keeping away if you are a quarantined person, for everyone's safety. As a vulnerable person connect with your loved ones by phone and the various video and social media alternatives until that person in quarantine has completed their quarantine and have a negative test results after 14 days.

Madam President,

On the matter of protecting our most vulnerable, I remind the public of the continued need to shield persons who are most at risk from COVID complications... complications that can lead to death.

Coronavirus can make anyone ill, but some persons are extremely vulnerable and are at a higher risk and need to take extra steps to avoid becoming ill, this is called shielding. **Shielding** is a measure to protect clinically extremely vulnerable people from coming into contact with coronavirus, by minimising all interaction between them and others, especially individuals not living in your household.

However, households living with a person at higher risk from infection will have to take steps to support the individual. Household members do not all need to start shielding themselves, but they should do what they can to support persons who must be shielded and to carefully follow guidance on avoiding high risk settings and practice physical distancing.

Madame President

While at home persons who are shielding should:

1. Ensure that all persons coming in their homes wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds upon arrival and often while they remain in your home.
2. Avoid face to face contact with the vulnerable person
3. Minimize the time other people living with vulnerable persons spend in shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas, and keep shared spaces well ventilated.

4. Keep 6 ft (2 metres) away from vulnerable persons you live with and encourage them to sleep in a different bed where possible. If possible, use a separate bathroom from the vulnerable person. Use separate towels from the vulnerable person, both for drying and after bathing or showering and for hand-hygiene purposes.
5. If a toilet and bathroom is shared with others, it's important that it is cleaned every time after use (for example, wiping surfaces you have come into contact with). Consider drawing up a rota for bathing, with the vulnerable person using the facilities first.
6. If the kitchen is shared, avoid using it while the vulnerable person is present. The vulnerable person should take their meals to their room to eat. Use a dishwasher if available to clean and dry used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using washing-up liquid and water and dry them thoroughly. A separate tea towel should be used if the vulnerable person is using their own utensils.
7. Everyone in the household should regularly wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, avoid touching their face and clean frequently touched surfaces.

Everyone in the family or household should try to follow this advice as far as they are able.

Madame President,

I encourage everyone to go to coronavirus.gov.bm and look at the extensive resource tools that have been created to guide us through these often confusing times.

Bermuda, please continue to practice physical distancing, minimise your social interactions and wear a mask. If you are going to be in close contact with people outside your household... wear a mask.

Masks are critical for reducing coronavirus transmission by as much as 80 per cent. They also act as a catch-all for the wearer who then protects others from any illness they may have.

The message of mask wearing and physical distancing is vitally important because these actions are keys to our success. As a country we will not contain COVID-19 or progress to Phase 4 without the public fully embracing these actions.

Madam President,

This is an opportune moment to remind the public again of our new **Reopening Scorecard** which can be viewed on the website.

You will see that “**Preventive Behaviours**” is the first category of indicators we are measuring... this is because they are the most important items that will enable us to move successfully through phases and the whole of Bermuda is needed to participate in these. For this reason I encourage the public to sign up to HealthIQ and update their status regularly. **HealthIQ** is a simple online tool that will help us as a community in our efforts to progress to the next phase of Covid-19 restrictions. In addition to tracking our community’s health status and symptoms that may be associated with Covid-19, the tool will help our public health teams to identify risks and resources needed to keep our communities safe.

Your participation and reports on HealthIQ informs Bermuda’s performance. The better we do on face mask wearing, physical distancing and adoption of technology, the better we will fare. As of last week we have just over 8,315, so well done Bermuda! The target is 10,000 minimum, so I encourage everyone, of any age to participate. Your data is confidential and cannot be viewed by anyone at all.

So visit healthiq.bm to download the App and help Bermuda get through our phased reopening.

Thank You Madame President

