

Precautions

I know these are dire times but I just want to send a positive message. The Government wants to stop the NHS being overwhelmed; it is now trying to keep higher risk people out of harm's way. Years ago, I was working on ss Canberra when we had an outbreak of Norovirus (a D&V illness). The ship was quarantined; I saw first-hand how infection spreads. It was down to a lack of poor hygiene and not washing hands correctly, and using shared towels. The epidemiologist that came on-board said the Norovirus started in the passengers staying in the Friendly Four cabins; then spread, mainly through the public washrooms. Imagine being contained on a ship, but we got through it. I was the Crew Assistant Purser at the time. We had 2,500 people (crew and passengers) onboard.

The best way to keep safe is to stick to strict protocols when it comes to hygiene: handwashing (when arriving home, before eating); use your own towels/do not share. As you know, I am a carer and I also have a lifelong underlying respiratory condition (asthmatic bronchitis) so I am being very careful. BUT I am going out to do essential things like shopping, vet visits for the animals, and caring for my Mum. I am just being very careful. The University has me on remote working which is very helpful as I can now work from home.

My protocols: I clean the shopping trolley handles with my anti-bacterial wipe; I take off outer clothes that have been outside and near other people when I return home, and change into my 'home' clothes; I wash my hands before doing anything else when I arrive home. I also social distance but I still see and talk to people; just 2 metres' distance. When I had the car serviced yesterday, I wiped down my seat, handles and wheel after I had used it with an anti-bacterial wipe; then did the same when it was returned to me. I also wipe over (with steriliser) any shopping items that need to go in the fridge. For other non-perishable items, such as cat food, it seems the C-19 does not survive longer than 72 hours on hard surfaces (less for soft) so it sits to one side in the bags for 72 hours. I have been following these protocols for about 3 weeks now, as I anticipated this disease was likely to spread.

You do not have to stay at home all the time; just social distance yourself. The main thing is to avoid groups of strangers and close contact; plus avoid those with a high temperature, cough or sneezes. I take my temperature every day to check I am safe to go out as I have a duty not to contaminate others.

I am not having people into my house, so I know for sure it is a clean area. So the Piano Tuner and the Chimney Sweep will have to wait. However, the outside bio-tec water tank can be serviced and emptied as all these people can work at a distance.

I will stop going to my Tai Chi class alas, as it is in an enclosed studio. However, there is much to be done in the garden, so that will be good exercise. Birdwatching is great fun at this time of year, and this is the time to be spring-cleaning the house. I have been baking too. Just because you cannot do your regular routines, remind yourself of other hobbies or activities you could do instead. Keeping busy is a good thing. The radio is good, but not too much media as it can be overwhelming and raise anxiety unnecessarily.

E-mail, blogs, WhatsApp all sound great. We will support each other and I'd welcome tips too. We will get through this. There is plenty of food in the shops; just remember, there are wonderful people still going to work, delivering goods, working in the stores. Now that's brave! Let's not be alarmist; ask what you can do to help others – perhaps befriend a person isolated alone through phone calls or Skype.

We just need to live a bit differently over the next few months. We can do this