

# Coronavirus: How to Help & Give Back

**It's easy to feel powerless in the face of COVID-19, but you can make a difference. Here are some ways to help and give back.**



## How you can help during the coronavirus pandemic

As we watch the coronavirus pandemic play out on a global scale, it's easy to feel helpless. But no matter who you are or what your situation, you can make a difference. Even if you're quarantined at home, there are still many ways to get involved and give back, including donating money or supplies, volunteering virtually, and checking in on people who might need support.

There is always something you can do to help others. And by helping others you will also

help yourself. Research shows that [volunteering makes you happier and healthier](#). Especially now—with most of us isolated from others or confined to interacting with only those in our household— it's a great way to reinforce your community ties and remind you that we're all working towards a common goal. Finding ways to give back during COVID-19 will help [lower your own anxiety and stress](#), boost your mood, and give you a sense of purpose during this difficult time.

## **Start with your community**

The easiest way to give back is by reaching out to the people you know. Neighbors, friends, co-workers, and relatives can all benefit from a friendly text or video call. It may seem like a small gesture, but don't underestimate the positive impact of checking up on someone. Start with those who might feel vulnerable right now. This could be your elderly neighbor who is cut off from their social connections or your friend who suffers from anxiety and depression. Providing a touchstone for someone during this time is one of the best ways to be of service. And it will help ease your own anxieties as well and give you an emotional boost.

If you're relatively young and healthy, another way to help is by running errands for those who are at higher risk of serious illness. Think of those in your local social circle who are elderly, disabled, or housebound. Reach out and see if they need help picking up groceries or prescriptions. You can leave bags outside their door to maintain a safe distance. Local social media groups or sites like Facebook or Nextdoor can help put you in touch with people in need in your area.

## **Make a donation**

While many people don't have extra funds right now, if you're one of the lucky ones who do, consider donating to an organization that's making a difference during the pandemic. Some possibilities include hospitals and health centers or national and local charities that provide housing, financial assistance, or food.

Another possibility is giving to GoFundMe fundraisers for essential workers impacted by COVID-19 or families who are struggling following illness or death.

You can also help your favorite local businesses stay afloat during this time by purchasing gift cards that can be used later, ordering delivery from restaurants that are still open, and shopping from home if they're still taking orders.

## Donate without spending money

If you're strapped for cash, there are ways to donate without spending money. Here are some goods that are in need.

- **Food.** With more people out of work, demand for food banks is expected to rise. At the same time, panic-buying and hoarding have reduced supplies. Supporting your local food pantry will help close the gap. While the best way to support food banks is through financial assistance so they can purchase what they need, you can also help by donating non-perishables like peanut butter, canned goods, pasta, rice, and beans.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).** Hospitals and healthcare centers are still facing shortages of PPE such as N95 masks and surgical masks. If you have some to spare, you can donate through organizations such as [GetUsPPE](#) and [DonatePPE](#).
- **Hard-to-find supplies.** Right now, it's difficult to find things like toilet paper, paper towels, hand sanitizer, bleach, rubbing alcohol, and disinfecting wipes. If you have more than you need, see if a local food bank, essential business, or anyone in your neighborhood or social group could use them.
- **Computers.** Since schools, offices, and libraries are closed, many of us have to rely on Internet access from home. But not everyone has a personal computer. In the United States, corporate and government organizations are being [called on to donate laptops and tablets](#). Encourage your company to take part.
- **Clothing.** Although most consignment shops have closed their physical locations, some are still accepting donations by mail. Research the ones in your area to see what their practices are. Spending more time at home might give you a good opportunity to clean out your closet or take on other de-cluttering projects. And as restrictions start to ease up, there may be more demand for clothes to wear on [job interviews](#).

## Give blood

Fewer people are donating blood at this time, which means the Red Cross is facing dire shortages. And as coronavirus cases continue to increase, the number of eligible donors has dropped. While many of us have been warned against "nonessential" errands, the [Red Cross](#) and other blood banks have remained open with safety precautions in place.

## Use your skills

Get creative with ways you can help out. Chances are you have a talent that can be of

service right now. Here are some skills that are in demand.

- **Sewing.** As hospitals are facing a shortage of personal protective equipment, some are asking for homemade masks. This is a great way to help out on the front lines. [Many American hospitals](#) are accepting contributions.
- **Web design.** As many small brick-and-mortar shops have had to switch to an e-commerce model, business owners need people who can create an appealing website, write copy, and photograph products.
- **Legal aid.** Many small businesses also need [legal help](#) to access funds from the federal stimulus package. If you're a lawyer, you can volunteer to help.
- **Financial services.** With many bank branches closed, [notary services](#) are also in demand. And if you're a certified financial planner, you can [lend your skills](#) to help those who [lost their jobs](#) due to the pandemic.
- **Virtual Fitness.** Maybe you're a skilled tap, ballet, or hip-hop dancer. Offering virtual classes are a great way to lift people's spirits and [get them moving](#). Yoga and [guided meditations](#) can help them relax as well.

## Express gratitude

Healthcare workers [are being tested physically and emotionally](#). Services such as [Health Hero Hotline](#) allow you to leave messages of appreciation and support. Call 877-226-HERO (4376). In many communities around the world, people are also gathering at their windows, decks, or front doors at certain times of day to collectively cheer on healthcare workers starting or ending their shifts.

## Look for ways to help vulnerable groups

[Meals on Wheels](#), an organization that delivers food to older people, is experiencing a surge in demand as health guidelines recommend that senior citizens stay at home as much as possible. In addition to delivering meals, you can also volunteer from home by checking in with seniors by phone. Another program, [Be My Eyes](#), pairs the blind and visually impaired with volunteers to help them with everyday tasks via video chat.

You can also contact local nursing homes, senior centers, or nonprofits serving those with cancer, disabilities, or other health challenges. Ask them how you can best help. Maybe you can deliver needed supplies, offer rides to the doctor, or simply write letters or make calls to help those who are isolated feel less lonely.

## Provide mental health support

Mental health helplines like [Crisis Text Line](#) are looking for volunteers to answer texts from people in crisis. The helpline has reported a surge of messages [expressing anxiety about the coronavirus](#). Helping relieve someone else's concerns may help you feel less alone and lower your own [stress levels](#) too.

## Consider your passions

Even if you're not contributing to a cause that directly involves fallout from the coronavirus, any kind of volunteering goes a long way. Many different organizations have a need for remote services. If you're a bookworm, [BookShare.org](#) offers books to people with reading disabilities. As a volunteer, you can scan books online for their collection. If you speak more than one language, [Translators Without Borders](#) is accepting services to translate texts into different languages for NGOs and nonprofits.

## Practice social distancing and self-care

Don't underestimate how much you're helping by simply following public health guidelines. Even by just staying at home as much as you can and practicing social distancing when you do go out, you're making a vital difference in your community.

Making an effort to stay healthy and avoiding high-risk activities will lower your own chances of contracting the coronavirus. This in turn will keep others from getting sick and overwhelming of the health care system. Sometimes taking care of yourself is the best thing you can do. As the saying goes, put your own mask on before you help someone else, literally and figuratively!



### Get more help

[Give Blood, Help Save Lives](#) - Outlines the safety precautions in place to donate blood during this time. (American Red Cross)

[A guide to helping and getting help during the coronavirus crisis](#) - Includes links to various organizations accepting donations and suggestions to support your community. (CNN)

# HelpGuide

[Masks for Heroes](#) - Get information on requesting and donating personal protection equipment worldwide.

[Hospitals Accepting Homemade Masks](#) - A list of American hospitals by state that are accepting donations of handmade masks. (UC Berkeley School of Public Health)

[Feeding America](#) - Help support your local food bank by donating cash or non-perishable items.

[Donating handmade face masks or other cloth items](#) - Guidelines for providing PPEs in the United Kingdom. (UK HealthCare)

[VolunteerMatch](#) - Pairs you with remote volunteer opportunities.

[How to help your community during the Coronavirus crisis](#) - More ideas to use your skills or provide needed services (Consumer Reports)

**Authors: Anne Artley. Reviewed by Melinda Smith, M.A. Last updated: April 2020.**