

COVID-19 IN SUMMARY SERIES

Keeping older persons, persons with dementia & their loved ones reliably informed on current events. Page 1 of 1.

- EVENT:** Digital Town Hall, focusing on our elderly population amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic
- DATE:** Wednesday 25 March 2020
- SPEAKERS:** Prime Minister The Honourable Andrew Holness (host); Minister of Local Government The Honourable Desmond McKenzie; Minister of State in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security The Honourable Zavia Mayne; Professor Eldemire- Shearer, Mona Ageing and Wellness Centre; Dr. Espinosa-Campbell, National Public Health Laboratory.
-

In summary, the Digital Town Hall focusing on older persons during the Covid-19 Pandemic reassured older Jamaicans that the government-mandated 'stay at home' order on all persons over 75 years of age was not intended to 'lock you off' but is 'trying to protect you.' The panelists answered several questions from older persons, summarised below for your convenience:

Question: If I have an appointment at the clinic/health centre, should I still go?

Answer: Yes. Older persons are encouraged to contact their health care facility to ensure that they can get there and be treated as safely as possible. The Ministry of Health & Wellness facilities will have schedules with specific times to treat non-COVID19 issues.

Question: What about those who lose their income, are disabled or need help?

Answer: Contact the Ministry of Labour and Social Security via the National Council for Senior Citizens or the Poor Relief Department. 2000 care packages and 1800 sanitisation packages have already been distributed. The Ministry is working hard to assist and support those in need.

Question: Will NIS benefits be increased?

Answer: We do not know at this time. Several factors will need to be considered before any decision is made about NIS benefits. However, in April, those who receive payment via vouchers will be able to access the full monthly amount at once from March 30, instead of fortnightly.

Question: Do I still need to present my signed proof of life certificate every month?

Answer: No. Between March and June, this will no longer be a requirement for pensioners.

Question: What if I am over 75, live alone and need to go out for groceries, etc?

Answer: The mandate to 'stay at home' should be taken seriously. **You can leave home when necessary** to conduct 'essentials of life' like going to market, for medications, exercise. etc.

Question: What if I feel isolated, afraid and discriminated against?

Answer: Reach out to friends and family via telephone. Remember that **COVID-19 is not a death sentence**. Although you are at high risk, avoiding contact with the virus will help safeguard you. Limit how much you watch the news. Know that government is trying to protect you, not scare you.