

I HOPE PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD WILL WORK TOGETHER TO OVERCOME COVID

Harumi (89) from Western Tokyo (Japan), widow, lives in a low-cost home for the elderly

COVID-FREE ENVIRONMENT

The facility has been taking good care of me, and they have given proper consideration since the beginning of the COVID pandemic. They were quick to notice the significant effects of COVID in the early stage of the pandemic. They told us about the virus and how easily it could spread, and worked so hard to ensure the COVID-free environment for us. They have made me realize how scary COVID could be. But I have spent the last few months without getting too nervous, thinking that the crisis will be over if we take precautions. So, over the last months, we have been doing what we can to prevent infections, following the facility's policies, and I have been doing my best so that I don't become the first COVID patient here.

STAYING HEALTHY

I avoid non-essential outings. I am also very careful when I have contact with other people. The facility has been very considerate, providing help in grocery shopping and many other things. So I haven't had any problems. I'm so lucky. Since I spent most of the time in my room, I was very worried about my physical health. But now, the facility organizes an exercise program led by an instructor seven times a month. So I don't need to worry too much about my health either. It is true that our everyday life has been restricted because of COVID, but I have been enjoying myself under the circumstances.

SHOPPING

About food, since before the COVID crisis, we have been free to get what we like to eat. Well, I do have a meal plan here, so they provide three meals a day. But we can freely get other food as we like. Since we cannot go out because of COVID, facility workers kindly go shopping for us. They have been taking really good care of us. Since around September, they also drive us to shopping once a month and take us to banks if we need to. So there is no problem at all.

POSTCARDS AND PHONE CALLS

My daughter lives a little far from here. So I told her that the facility staff would go shopping for me when I couldn't go out freely because of COVID. She sometimes sends me cash and my favorite food. I have three grandchildren, all in their 30s and 40s. They used to visit me two or three times a month to help me go shopping. But they have stopped coming here, saying, "Younger people like us may be carriers of the virus without knowing it. So unless you really need us to, we can't visit you for a while." Instead, they send me postcards now. Consequently, I do not have many opportunities to see my family face to face. They often call me and let me know how they are doing. So I have spent the last 6 months with no desire to complain about not being able to see them. I'm grateful for that.

WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER

I think it is truly important, particularly now, for us to keep track of what's going on in society through TV and other media. And I hope people throughout the world will work together to overcome COVID. Japan and other countries may be working hard individually, but we cannot expect good results unless COVID disappears from the entire world. So I hope everyone across the world will work together on this.

Harumi was interviewed on 24 September 2020. Her story was shared with us by [International Longevity Center \(ILC\) Japan](#) - 国際長寿センター, member of the ILC Global Alliance, an international federation researching and advocating the vitality and the societal and economical position of older people. In the Netherlands, the ILC network is represented by Leyden Academy.