



25 March 2020

Dear citizens of Cologne,

My sincere thanks go out to those who are understanding of the situation and observing the cautionary regulations, thereby making an important contribution to ensuring that we can continue to expect good medical care in the future.

We must all submit to the far-reaching restrictions of the contact ban. For some, they have also been placed under domestic or in-patient quarantine. I am aware of the sacrifices these measures entail, and at this stage no one can say how long this situation will last. Amidst this crisis, we are learning more every day.

Today I am speaking to you once again on a matter that is of particular importance to me: It is one of the most difficult but also most urgent pleas to protect those most severely affected by the Corona virus. I am referring to the necessity to avoid all direct contact between younger people, such as grandchildren, and older people, especially people over 65 and people with pre-existing conditions. For these groups, infection poses a particularly high risk and can - I must speak plainly - be a matter of life or death. We must absolutely avoid these contacts, no matter how important they may be to us.

This might appear heartless under normal circumstances, but in times like these it has become a sign of affection. And even though we can no longer meet in person, no one should feel lonely, because even without personal visits and meetings there are so many ways to stay connected: phone calls, video calls, emails, sending photos, voice messages or letters. The grandchildren know all the tips and tricks. Express your affection in these ways.

The virus is invisible, you can neither smell nor taste it; which is what makes it so mysterious. Unfortunately, this also means that anyone and everyone, even if they feel healthy, may be contagious. Every bit of direct contact may have been that one bit of contact too much.

Dear senior citizens, please refrain from family get-togethers, meetings with your children or grandchildren, but also with others who are particularly at risk.

Dear children, teenagers, dear adults, anyone and everyone can be a carrier of the virus without knowing it and without experiencing any symptoms. No matter how healthy you feel: Protect your parents and grandparents, friends or neighbours with pre-existing conditions, for whom getting infected may have dire consequences.

I implore you to avoid contact with and among people in risk groups or to reduce it to the absolute minimum. In the interest of those who are most vulnerable. For the sake of your loved ones.

Sincerely yours,

*Henriette Reker*