

COVID-19 and Your Mental Health

A public health emergency, like the COVID-19 outbreak, can be stressful, especially for people who have a pre-existing medical condition, who are traveling, or are separated from friends and family members at home and abroad.

For individuals and communities who have to self-isolate, are choosing to socially distance themselves, or who have otherwise directly been impacted by COVID-19, there may be heightened awareness, concern, anxiety, and fear. For many, a sense of loss or feeling like you don't have control may be common. Try to be patient with yourself and others because people may not cope like they usually do.

Helpful Tips:

- Focus on getting information that will help you take practical steps to protect yourself and your loved ones. Taking in too much or constant information about COVID-19 can cause you or those around you to feel worried or anxious.
- Limit the amount of time you spend watching, reading, or listening to news about COVID-19. Seek information at specific times once or twice a day, for example once in the morning and once in the evening.
- Get the facts about COVID-19 from reliable sources such as www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx#p22780s1 or Health Canada www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html.
- When you have no control over a stressful having a plan and being emotionally prepared can help you stay calm, feel more in control, and reduce stress. Your plan should include what changes need to make to reduce the risk of infection and what to do if you or someone in your family or household becomes sick. To help you plan or for more information go to www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html.
- Focused on the positive. There is effective care for COVID-19; people with COVID-19 are recovering and after recovering from COVID-19, will go on with their lives, including jobs, families and loved ones. Keep in mind that this situation is temporary, and eventually things will return to normal.
- Find comfort in your spiritual/personal beliefs and practices.
- Maintain your regular routines as much as possible. Focus on what needs to happen today, and make a list of what you need to do in the next day or week to keep yourself safe and comfortable.
- Be mindful. Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and body sensations. This can help you understand why you're feeling anxious or stressed. If you're having trouble managing your stress or anxiety talk to someone you trust, contact your healthcare provider, or call the Mental Health Helpline at [1-877-303-2642](tel:1-877-303-2642).
- Practicing breathing techniques is a one way to help you manage stress and anxiety. It can calm your nervous system and help you think more clearly. Take a slow deep breath in as you count to 5 and then exhale, also counting to 5 (repeat 10 times). Practice doing this throughout your day.
- Be sure to rest and try to get enough sleep. Lack of sleep can make you feel overwhelmed, which will make it harder to cope during stressful times.
- Avoid or limit drinks with caffeine (e.g., pop, coffee, tea, energy drinks), they can make you feel anxious or restless and affect your sleep.



- Avoid or limit drinks with alcohol. It can disrupt normal sleep patterns, cause changes in your mood, and make feelings of stress and anxiety worse.
- For those with an existing mental illness (e.g., anxiety disorders like post-traumatic stress disorder, mood disorders like major depressive disorder and/or psychotic disorders like schizophrenia) no alcohol use is the safest choice. Alcohol use can make symptoms of the mental illness worse.
- For parents and caregivers, try to model healthy and positive coping skills. Your child sees your emotions through your words, facial expressions, and actions. How you respond to the stress of a pandemic can affect how your child reacts. Modeling calm and constructive reactions to the event will help your child feel calmer and cope better. It's okay to have strong emotions. Name them (e.g., "I feel frustrated." or "I feel sad."). Talk about how you feel and how you're going to cope (e.g., deep breathing, positive thinking) so your child learns how to do the same.
- If you are in self-isolation or you have been advised by health authorities to limit contact with others it's important to still keep your personal care routines (e.g., bathing), engage in healthy activities (e.g., stretching, meditation, listening to music), and connecting with friends and family through phone calls, text messaging, email, Skype, and face-time.
- If you decide to voluntarily socially distance yourself, consider spending time at home with friends and family. Find activities that you can do together like making and sharing meals, playing games, or watching TV.

Helpful Resources

- Health Link: [811](#)
- Mental Health Helpline: [1-877-303-2642](#)
- Kids Help Phone: [1-800-668-6868](#)
- Provincial [211](#) (provides referrals for community, government, and social services

