

COVID-19: Stress and Coping

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is proving to be stressful for many people in our community. Fear and anxiety about any disease can become overwhelming and leave adults and children with strong feelings. However, we can cope with stress! Effective coping can help you and the people you care about (and our community!) stronger.

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in. People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:

- Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for COVID-19
- Children and teens
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors and other health care providers, or first responders
- People who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use

If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others call:

- **911**
- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Helpline: [1-800-985-5990](tel:1-800-985-5990) or text [TalkWithUs](text:TalkWithUs) to [66746](tel:66746). (TTY [1-800-846-8517](tel:1-800-846-8517))**

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms.

Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

Things you can do to support yourself

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.