

Stress and Coping

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

Things you can do to support yourself:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news, including social media.
- 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.
- Sharing accurate information about COVID-19 can help make people feel less stressed and allow you to connect with them.

Parents watch for these behaviors:

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (example: toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain

Ways to support your children:

- Reassure them that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset.
- Limit your family’s exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

GETTING HELP

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 Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517)