

Everyone reacts differently to stress

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in both adults and children. How you respond depends on your background, support system, and the community you live in. People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:

- Older people and people at higher risk (chronic diseases)
- Children and teens
- People who are helping with the response, like doctors, healthcare providers, and first responders
- People who have mental health conditions, including problems with substance use

Signs of stress 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

Reducing stress in yourself and others

Learn the facts about COVID-19 from reliable sources and understand the actual risk to yourself and people you care about. Make time to connect with others and find things you can do to keep yourself engaged.

Questions and concerns can also be directed to the toll-free 24/7 COVID-19 hotline at 1-800-887-4304.

Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.

Additional resources:

- 844-HELP4WV (844-435-7498) offers a 24/7 call, chat and text line that provides immediate help for any West Virginian struggling with an addiction or mental health issue.
- The 24/7 Disaster Distress Hotline provides immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.

Things you can do to support yourself



Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media.



Eat healthy meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.



Make time to unwind. Try to do activities you enjoy.



Connect with others. Talk about your concerns and how you are feeling.

For Parents and Caregivers

When parents and caregivers deal with COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include:

- Excessive crying or irritation
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Ways to support your child:

- Take time to talk with your child or teen
- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe
- Monitor their media - limit exposure to news coverage and frightening images
- Try to keep their days as routine and scheduled as possible
- Give them control and remind them what they can do to help, like washing their hands often
- Be a role model - take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well

Learn more about [helping children cope](#).

For Responders

Responding to COVID-19 can take an emotional toll. Ways to reduce stress include:

- Acknowledge that stress can impact anyone helping during a traumatic event
- Learn the symptoms including physical (fatigue, illness) and mental (fear, withdrawal, guilt)
- Allow time for you and your family to recover from responding to the pandemic
- Make time for personal self-care activities that you enjoy, such as spending time with family, exercising, or reading a book
- Take a break from media coverage
- Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed or concerned

Learn more [tips for taking care of yourself](#) during emergency response.

