

COVID-19

Guidance & Tools to Support Mental Wellness

The past few weeks have seen significant changes as our provincial health-care system and public sector respond to COVID-19. These changes include the identification of positive cases, new and evolving work processes, frequent communication, changes to our home and social lives and constant media coverage. All of these impact our mental health and well-being.

In a pandemic, it is normal for individuals to feel stressed. Common stress responses may include feeling afraid (of becoming sick or getting someone else sick), worried, anxious, overwhelmed, tired or unable to concentrate, irritable, sad or lonely.

There may also be physical signs of stress such as headache, muscle tightness or stomach upset.

These are all normal responses and there are many tools and techniques to help you manage these stress reactions and promote positive coping, mental health wellbeing and resiliency.

We recommend the following:

Validate your reactions

Consider any stress reactions you may be having. Acknowledge the impact that COVID-19 is having on you, and that your thoughts and feelings may change as the situation continues to unfold and change.

Remember you are resilient

Draw upon positive coping skills you have successfully used in the past and add new techniques. For example, focus on the good work you are doing to help keep yourself, your family, your workplace, and your community safe.

Secure supports

Continue to connect with your supports on a regular basis. Social distancing may require the use of telephone, Facetime and other social mediums. Reach out to those who support you in times of stress, including to spiritual advisors as you wish. Let your supports know when you are feeling stressed and accept their offers to listen or to help.

Make a list of your formal supports, including your work supervisor or Blue Cross Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and your informal supports such as friends and family. Reach out to them when you start to experience stress reactions. Contact the Blue Cross Employee

Assistance Program (EAP) at 1-800-590-5553 as needed. Crisis lines are another area of support, and many are available 24/7.

Continue to support one another at work and acknowledge that each person will have their own individual stress reactions. Be mindful of the impact constant COVID-19 talk can have and limit this in break areas.

Ask how others are doing, listen to their response and offer support. A simple, “How are you doing? I’m here for you.” goes a long way.

Reduce stressors

Being prepared can reduce stress. This includes planning and preparing for your family, child care, food or supplies. Knowing your family is cared for will help reduce your overall stress.

Understanding what is expected of you at work and being prepared can also help reduce stress.

Being self-aware can help you identify the reason for feeling stressed and allow you to develop strategies to reduce your stress. For example, a contributing factor to feeling stressed may be watching the news or reading COVID-19 news or social media stories before going to bed.

Practice self-care

Take care of your basic needs. Ensure you are getting enough rest, eat healthy food, drink plenty of water, engage in physical activity and stay in contact with family and friends. Wash your hands frequently. Do not touch your mouth or nose. Practice social distancing.

Wipe down frequently used surfaces (including your phone and keyboard). Go for a walk, try a new yoga app, keep moving! Listen to music, watch a comedy or learn to meditate. Every day, we can make a difference in our own mental health by being mindful of our self-care.

Should you develop respiratory (COLD or FLU) like symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) stay home, communicate with your manager, and call your region or site’s Occupational Health Nurse or designate, Health Links-Info Santé at (1-888-315-9257).

In a medical emergency, call 911.

Keep informed

As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, know that ongoing and intense work continues throughout the province to contain and mitigate this virus. Daily updates and memos are provided so please stay informed and up to date.

Supporting patients/clients/residents/families

Individuals you are supporting as well as their families may also be experiencing significant stress and have reactions such as fear, worry, anxiety, anger or sadness. It is important to recognize that the emotions you see are likely due to their own stress.

The following response from you is important to maintain and strengthen you/your organization's relationship with these individuals:

- If there is a safety risk, go somewhere safe and call security or 911 immediately
- If there is not a safety risk:
 - Remain calm.
 - Acknowledge their emotion (“I can see that you are worried”).
 - Acknowledge the situation (“This must be very hard for you”).
 - Convey compassion and empathy through nonverbal communication, your tone and your words (“I am sorry that visitors are not allowed at the present time”).
 - Provide information (“The reason this is occurring is so that....”).
 - Ask or problem solve around what would be helpful (“You cannot visit right now, but can I ask your family member to call you instead?”).
 - Listen. The power of listening cannot be overestimated. If you do not have time to listen, find someone who does.

Mental health resources across the regions

WRHA and Manitoba:

Mobile Crisis Lines: 204-940-1781

Klinik Crisis line: 204-786-8686 or toll-free 1-877-435-7170

Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba: <http://www.mooddisordersmanitoba.ca/>

Canadian Mental Health Association of Manitoba and Winnipeg: 204-982-6100
www.mbwpg.cmha.ca

Mental Health Education Resource Centre
204-942-6568 or toll-free 1-855-942-6568
www.mherc.mb.ca

Anxiety Disorder Association of Manitoba
204-925-0600 or toll-free 1-800-805-8885
www.adam.mb.ca

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line: 1-855-242-3310

Churchill Health Centre: 204-675-8881

Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority:

Mental Health Resources: [Interlake-Eastern RHA Mental Health & Wellness Resources](#)

Crisis Line: 204-482-5419 or toll-free 1-866-427-8628

Mobile Crisis Service: 204-482-5376 or toll free 1-877-499-8770

Canadian Mental Health Association:
Interlake-Eastern: 204-482-9723
Website: www.interlakeeastern.cmha.ca

Northern Health Region:

Canadian Mental Health Association-The Pas:204-623-1028

The Pas Crisis Services After Hours: 204-623-6431

Opaskwayak Cree Nation Crisis Line: 204-623-0519

Flin Flon Crisis Services After Hours: 204-687-7591

Thompson Crisis Services After Hours: 204-677-2381

Canadian Mental Health Association-Thompson: 204-677-6050

Website: www.thompson.cmha.ca

Prairie Mountain Health Region:

South Crisis Line:1-888-379-7699

North Crisis Line: 1-866-332-3030.

Canadian Mental Health Association-Parkland: 204-734-2734

Website: www.parkland.cmha.ca

Southern Health-Santé Sud Health Region:

Crisis Line: 1-888-617-7715

Canadian Mental Health Association-Central: 204-239-6590

Website: www.central.cmha.ca

Free downloads and websites:

CALM

CBT-I Coach

Mindfulness Coach

Mindshift

www.calminthestormapp.com

www.stopbreathethink.com

www.smilingmind.com.au