

Tips for the Public: Managing Your Stress



Know the Signs of Stress

Your Behavior:

- Increase or decrease in your energy and activity levels
- Increase in your alcohol, tobacco or illegal drug use
- Increase in irritability, with outbursts of anger or frequent arguing
- Difficulty relaxing or sleeping
- Frequent crying
- Placing blame on other people for everything
- Difficulty communicating or listening
- Difficulty giving or accepting help

Your Body:

- Stomachaches or diarrhea
- Headaches and other pains
- Loss of appetite or overeating
- Sweating or having chills
- Tremors or muscle twitches
- Being easily startled

Your Emotions:

- Anxious or fearful
- Inability to feel pleasure or have fun
- Depression
- Guilt
- Anger
- Wanting to be alone
- Feeling heroic, euphoric or invulnerable
- Not caring about anything
- Overwhelming sadness

Your Thinking:

- Difficulty remembering things
- Confusion
- Difficulty thinking clearly and concentrating
- Excessive worrying
- Difficulty making decisions

What You Should Know

When you are exposed to a public health incident or the idea of a potential public health incident, you should know how these events can affect your personal health and well-being. During stressful times, it is imperative to monitor your physical and mental health. Learn to recognize the signs of stress and know when to implement healthy behaviors.

In times like the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, it is easy to become overwhelmed. For up-to-date information, refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

[cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/)



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Know How to Relieve Stress

Keep Yourself Healthy:

- Eat healthy foods and drink water.
- Avoid excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol.
- Do not use tobacco or illegal drugs.
- Get enough sleep and rest.
- Exercise.

Use Practical Ways to Relax:

- Relax your body often by doing what works for you — take deep breaths, stretch, meditate, engage in pleasurable hobbies, or something as simple as washing your face and hands.
- Pace yourself between stressful activities and do something fun after a hard task.
- Use time off to relax — eat a good meal, read, listen to music, take a bath or talk to family.
- Talk about your feelings to loved ones and friends.
- Limit exposure to media.

Pay Attention to Your Body, Feelings and Spirit:

- Recognize and heed early warning signs of stress.
- Recognize how your own past experiences affect your way of handling an event. Focus on the ways you handled previous stressful events well.
- Connect with your community support.

How to Help Children and Adolescents

- Provide a safe environment.
- Remain calm — children and adolescents will mimic your behavior.
- Keep normal routines.
- Share age-appropriate information.
- Prevent or limit media exposure.
- Practice active listening.
- Teach coping skills:
 - Slow breathing
 - Counting
 - Calming music
 - Soft pillows, blankets or stuffed animals

More Information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

— branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

[samhsa.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov)

For additional information, contact your health care provider or your local health care authorities.



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