

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

MANAGING ANXIETY AND STRESS

KNOW THE SIGNS OF STRESS¹

Behavior	Body	Emotions/Thoughts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•An increase in energy and activity levels•Increase in alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use•Increased irritability•Trouble relaxing or sleeping•Crying and worrying excessively•Blaming others for everything•Difficulty communicating or listening•Difficulty giving or accepting help•Inability to feel pleasure or have fun	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Stomach aches•Diarrhea•Headaches•Loss of appetite•Overeating•Sweats or chills•Tremors•Muscle twitches•Easily startled	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Anxious/fearful•Depressed•Guilty•Angry•Not caring about anything•Overwhelmed by sadness•Forgetfulness•Confusion•Trouble thinking clearly and concentrating•Difficulty making decisions

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE ANXIETY AND STRESS^{2,3}

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Find a few trusted news sources for your information and stick with them.
- ▶ Practice social media self-discipline; don't post all the time and know when to walk away.
- ▶ It's okay to worry! Understand that fear is totally normal in this situation, and seek support from others. Help each other through this time.

People may turn to alcohol, drugs, or other substances and behaviors of abuse during this time. Per the Harm Reduction Coalition, these are some precautions one can take, as well as the risks of using during this outbreak.

DRUG USE AND COVID-19⁴

▶ Take Precaution

- **Do not share your supplies.** This includes needles, pipes, cigarettes, etc. Place used supplies in a bio-bucket, separate from clean supplies. Sharing supplies with someone who has COVID-19 will increase your risk of contracting the virus, especially if sharing saliva.
- **Practice social distancing.** CDC advises staying at least six feet away from one another to help slow and/or stop the spread of the disease. COVID-19 can be transmitted through kissing, coughing and bodily fluids. Minimize close contact with one another and use barriers (condoms, dental dams, etc.) if engaging in sex.
- **Know what is in your drugs.** This means preparing your drugs yourself. Wash your hands and keep surfaces clean using a cleanser with at least 60% alcohol. If someone who is preparing your drugs has COVID-19, transmission of the virus is likely once the drugs are used by you.
- **Be prepared for an emergency.** First responders are spread thin during this time. There is a possibility the first response time may take longer than usual, especially in rural areas. In case of an overdose, you must be prepared. Make sure you have naloxone and fentanyl testing strips in stock. If using alone, try to decrease the amount of drug use.

▶ Practice Hygiene

- **Wash Your Hands.** Scrub hands thoroughly with warm water and soap for 20 seconds. If you do not have access to soap and water, use a generous amount of hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) when around others, after using public transportation, before eating, before using, and before touching your face.

▶ Stock Up

- **Stock up on supplies, drugs, and medications.** Limiting contact with others includes contact with your dealer, the medical office, etc. If possible, ask your doctor about stocking up on your prescription medication for the next month. Also, stock up on naloxone if you will be using with others.

REFERENCES

¹Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). *Coping with stress during infectious disease outbreaks* (HHS Publication No. SMA14-4885). Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services

²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). Managing anxiety & stress. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

³Willingham, AJ. (2020). How to keep coronavirus fears from affecting your mental health. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/14/health/coronavirus-fears-mental-health-wellness-trnd/index.html>

⁴Harm Reduction Coalition. (2020). COVID-19 guidance for people who use drugs and harm reduction programs. Retrieved from <https://harmreduction.org/miscellaneous/covid-19-guidance-for-people-who-use-drugs-and-harm-reduction-programs/>

