

Coping with Stress and Anxiety During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Fear, anxiety, and stress are common responses to the current outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Monitoring and coping with your own physical and mental health reactions to COVID-19 will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger. Taking care of your physical and mental health during the current outbreak of COVID-19 will also help your heart health and long-term healing.

DIFFICULTIES DURING COVID-19 OUTBREAK MAY INCLUDE:

- Worrying about your health and the health of those you care about.
- Low mood, increased anxiety, and/or increased irritability.
- Sleeping more or less than usual or difficulties falling or staying asleep.
- Eating more or less than usual.
- Difficulties concentrating and/or with memory.
- Increased difficulties with chronic health problems.
- Increased use of caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.
- Stress from self-isolating and disruptions of routines (e.g., work, exercise, etc.)
- Worry about loss of income and job insecurity.
- Uncertainty about securing basic needs such as groceries, medications, or personal care items.

The next page outlines some ways to support your mental well-being during uncertain times.

WHEN TO SEEK ADDITIONAL SUPPORT:

Contact your family doctor or primary healthcare provider if you experience persistent mental health difficulties associated with COVID-19 for a period of 2 to 4 weeks or more. If you experience recurrent, intense, and overwhelming mental health challenges, please call the Distress Centre (403-266-4357 and available 24 hours/day) or 9-1-1.

Your health coaching team at TotalCardiology Rehabilitation will follow-up with you weekly via phone calls. Tele-consults with our program doctors and psychology services are also available. You can reach us at 403-571-6950 Monday to Friday from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm.

HOW TO HELP YOURSELF	
Create and follow a daily routine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While social distancing might mean changes in your routines and habits, creating and maintaining a new or modified daily routine can help you maintain a sense of order and purpose. • Consider building a routine of self-care activities, exercise, hobbies, and relaxation techniques.
Take care of your body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat healthy and well-balanced meals, take medications as prescribed, exercise regularly, and prioritize your sleep. We have a variety of resources online to support you here: https://tcrehab.totalcardiology.ca/heart-health/ • Minimize or avoid consuming alcohol, tobacco, and other recreational drugs.
Connect with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share personal concerns and feeling with trusted friends or family members, build a strong support system, and maintain relationships. • Use technologies to stay connected with friends and loved ones during periods of social isolation.
Stay informed and get the facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow updates from reputable and official sources of information such as Alberta Health Services or the World Health Organization. • Always check on the source of news and stories found online or on social media.
Avoid extreme exposure to news and social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While keeping yourself informed is important, too much media exposure could lead to increased anxiety, stress, and/or low mood. • Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening news stories and social media. • Try to regularly unwind and do enjoyable activities.
Use practical ways to cope with stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relax your body by practicing breathing exercises, stretching, and/or meditating. • Engaging in activities you enjoy might also help you relax your body and reduce emotional suffering. • Support positive thinking by maintaining a journal of things you are grateful for or that elicit positive emotions.
Continue medical and psychological treatments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with pre-existing chronic health conditions, including heart and mental health conditions, should continue their treatments and be aware of new or worsening symptoms.