

COVID-19

Supporting Mental Health and Wellness

As COVID-19 dominates the news cycle and social media, it is important to be mindful of where to go for accurate information from trusted sources. Information is regularly being updated on the Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living and Shared Health websites.

While it is important to have accurate information, it is similarly important to recognize the impact that a sustained and evolving public health situation can have on our mental health including reactions that may range from fear, anger, worry, and sadness to difficulty concentrating.

To manage these reactions and promote positive mental health and wellness, we recommend the following steps to ensure mental health well-being and resiliency:

Validate your reaction

Acknowledge that your thoughts and feelings are normal stress reactions to an abnormal event.

Remember you are resilient

Note the positive ways you have managed stressful situations in the past and draw upon these. Although this situation may be different, you have successfully managed stress in the past.

Secure supports

Keep connected with people you typically reach out to in times of stress. These natural supports will play an important role in maintaining your positive mental health and wellness.

Support one another as colleagues: check on each other, be mindful of conversation content, create calm and supportive work environments. Be patient with one another.

Reach out to the Blue Cross Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 1-800-590-5553 as needed.

Reduce stressors

This may include actions such as limiting time listening to or watching the news, limiting talk about COVID-19 during break times, or taking a break in a quiet location away from the workspace.

Practice self-care

Eat healthy meals, ensure regular physical activity/exercise, get enough rest, drink plenty of water, practice good hand hygiene. Avoid unhealthy coping strategies (alcohol, drugs, etc.).

Consider exploring: www.wellbeingguide.ca or, try the *Calm in the Storm* app at: <http://calminthestormapp.com/>

Keep informed

Know that intense work is underway locally and provincially. Health system leaders and clinical and public health experts from the province, Shared Health and Manitoba's health authorities are working together to prepare for Manitoba's response to COVID-19. Pandemic plans developed and lessons learned during H1N1 and SARS are helping to support the current response.

Ensure you receive accurate information. Visit the Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living and Shared Health websites regularly to check for updates

Understand the job functions expected of you. If you are unsure, ask your manager

Know what to do if you experience 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) or 911 if it is an emergency.

Many of these recommendations can be offered in support of patients/clients/residents. For further information about COVID-19 and mental health, check out the comprehensive document on Mental Health and Psychosocial Aspects of COVID-19 outbreak, drafted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, available by referring to <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/briefing-note-covid-and-mental-health.pdf>.