

# COVID-19: Health & Wellbeing Toolkit



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## Introduction

The outbreak of COVID-19 has affected people on an international scale, and people may feel afraid, worried, anxious, and overwhelmed with the request for self-isolation and the constantly changing alerts and media coverage regarding the spread of the virus.

Many are worried about their health and the health of their loved ones. People may also have concerns around work, their finances, their ability to take part in community and social events and hobbies, and other important parts of their lives. Stress and anxiety are normal reactions to a pandemic like COVID-19, and the impacts it has on daily life.

It is increasingly difficult to avoid the bleak headlines and bright-red news banners. While it's natural to seek information about this unfolding pandemic, we must also take steps to prioritize and protect our mental health and wellbeing.

## Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategies

The fight-or-flight response releases stress hormones, which increases heart rate, blood pressure, and overall alertness, so it's normal to feel anxious in the face of a threat like COVID-19. People who already experience stress or anxiety may find it worsening because there is a lot of confusion and anxiety over what the future holds. It can be hard to keep up, and it can be even harder to remain calm, so it is important to be kind to yourself. This is an anxious and stressful time for everyone, and it's okay if you feel more stressed or anxious than usual, and you must make time for yourself to manage your mental health.

There are things that we can do to deal with the stress and anxiety that we may be feeling and support one another during this challenging and unprecedented time. The following sections provide mental health and wellbeing strategies and tips to cope with COVID-19 impacts while continuing to look after each other and ourselves during this difficult time.

### Show Compassion and Kindness to One Another

During this unprecedented time it's important that we strengthen our sense of community by connecting with and supporting each other. We can manage this much better together in solidarity.

Ask friends, family members, or neighbours if they need anything, such as groceries or other household needs. Simply checking in regularly by phone, text, email, or video call can make a big difference.

Stay in touch with anyone you think may struggle through self-isolation, and let them know you care:

- Call them to check in
- Send an email
- Leave a note under their door

Don't underestimate the power you have to offer hope to another person!

### Stay Connected

Social/physical distancing will help control the spread of the virus. At the same time, isolating yourself from others can affect your mood and create even greater feelings of isolation, loneliness, and sometimes depression. Get creative with how you interact, and find various ways to stay connected with the people in your life:

- Call your family, friends and colleagues

- Connect online with video chats or emails; offer a virtual hug over FaceTime or Skype
- Send text messages

## Self-Care and Routines

Be sure to maintain routines where possible: connect with family and friends via phone or video chat, stay physically active, eat nutritious foods, and seek additional support by contacting a professional as required.

Build self-care into your day as activities change and routines are disrupted. All the things you do to take care of yourself will help manage your stress. And by taking good care of yourself, you'll be better prepared to take care of others.

If you are having trouble managing your mental health, contact your healthcare provider and encourage those you love to do the same. Remember that it's ok if you need help.

## Some self-care and stress management ideas:

- **Meditate**
  - Find a guided meditate podcast (try Meditation Minis, Tara Brach, Daily Meditation or search 'meditation' wherever you listen to podcasts)
  - Download a free mindfulness app (try Calm, Headspace, Aura, or search 'meditation' in the App Store or Google Play)
- **Practice deep breathing**
  - Check out [WebMD](#) for breathing techniques for stress relief, or search 'breathing techniques' in your preferred search engine
- **Read about something other than the virus**
- **Start a digital detox (leave your phone alone for a while, or portions of your day)**
- **Make time for hobbies**
- **Exercise – dedicate time each day to being mobile.**
  - Go for a walk outside (if you can, and keep your distance at 2 meters)
  - Follow along to a YouTube workout video, or
  - Find a way of staying active that suits you
- **Eat healthily**
- **Get enough sleep**
- **Organize yourself**
  - Set aside a few minutes each day to create a planner to get your thoughts straight
- **Write a reflection journal**
  - Create a journal where you can write down your thoughts and process events that have happened to you. This can help you get a fresh prospective about the situation you're in

## Know the Health Facts

Look to trusted and reliable organizations and agencies for information about steps you can take to reduce your risk of getting sick or passing the illness on to others. If you or loved ones are vulnerable to COVID-19, talk to your doctor or care team about any additional measures to take based on your situation.

Links to some of the reliable health resources can be found under the [Mental Health Self-Management Programs](#), [Additional Mental Health and Wellbeing Resources](#) and [Recommended COVID-19 Resources](#) sections.

## Media Sources

Be mindful of information sources, and of the sensationalized language used in the news. It is important to see through sensationalistic language and news, and focus on the key message and practical

takeaways of reliable sources instead. Avoid sources that sensationalize COVID-19, and stick to trusted, verified news sources. Credible sources provide plain, accurate facts to counteract the sensationalism and fear-provoking imagery found in the news.

For a list of recommended sources to keep up-to-date on plain COVID-19 facts, check out the [Recommended COVID-19 Resources](#) section.

## Limit News Consumption

It's important to stay informed, but the information we allow in affects how we feel, and we should monitor that intake with care. Limit your updates to a small number of designated times per day from reliable news sources. With a rapidly evolving situation like COVID-19, it can feel like even a few hours without an update will leave us in the dark, but the more often we receive information, the more it will play on our minds, and the more difficult it will be to disengage.

While there is plenty of fact-based content on social media, it is also much more likely to turn hearsay into misinformation, so limit social media use if it's increasing your stress and anxiety levels. If daily conversations about COVID-19 are causing you stress or anxiety, it's okay to tell family, friends, and co-workers that you can't participate in the conversation.

## Have a Plan

It's hard to predict exactly what will happen next, but preparing for situations like self-isolation can help reduce some uncertainty about the future. BC residents are advised by health officials and the government to keep two weeks of supplies at home in case they have to quarantine themselves. This includes food, household products, prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, and supplements.

## Follow a “Calm Yet Cautious” Approach

Do your best to remain calm and be mindful not to contribute to the widespread panic that can hinder efforts to positively manage the outbreak. Ensure you are following directives issued by the government, medical professional, and observe good hygiene habits.

Maintaining a sense of calm, especially when talking to children, will go a long way toward easing their fears and uncertainty. Provide age-appropriate, factual information and give them the opportunity to ask questions and share how they are feeling. This is an uncertain time for everyone, and children may be impacted by fear and anxiety.

### *Here are some tips on how to ensure your children are supported:*

- Give your children extra attention and reassurance. Where possible, minimize their exposure to media and social media that may heighten anxiety
- Acknowledge your own feelings about the situation and let children know it's okay to share their own feelings
- Include your children in plans and activities around the house
- If you don't see an improvement in 4 weeks (or earlier, if needed), or if you are concerned, seek professional help

## Mental Health Self-Management Programs

Following strategies and tips for mental health and wellbeing seems easy in theory, but taking them into practice can be difficult. Some people may benefit from additional support.

*Here are some signs you might benefit from extra help and support:*

- You can't think about anything other than COVID-19
- Your anxiety interferes with your daily life – for example, you have a hard time going to work or being in public spaces even when the risk is very low
- You isolate yourself from others when it isn't necessary
- You feel hopeless or angry about the situation
- You have a hard time eating or sleeping well
- You experience physical symptoms like frequent headaches or an upset stomach

In Canada, there are multiple mental health services and programs available **for free** to reduce stress, anxiety, and improve the outlook for people who may feel hopeless or lost. They are Starling Minds, Bounce Back Online, and Anxiety Canada.

### Starling Minds

You can take the Starling Minds COVID-19 Mental Health Program **for free**. It is suitable for anyone who may need support during the COVID-19 crisis, and is 100% confidential.

To register, visit:

<https://info.starlingminds.com/covid19-free-mental-health>

### Bounce Back Online

You can take Bounce Back Online, a self-directed course from the Canadian Mental Health Association to help manage low mood, stress, and anxiety. The online version is available **for free**, no referral needed.

Visit:

[www.online.bouncebackonline.ca](http://www.online.bouncebackonline.ca)

### Anxiety Canada

Explore self-management strategies like mindfulness, yoga, meditation, art, or exercise to manage anxious thoughts. They also offer MindShift CBT, a **free app** available through Google Play or the App Store, which uses Cognitive Behaviour Therapy strategies to help tackle worry, panic, etc.

You can find additional self-management strategies for anxiety from Anxiety Canada at:

[www.anxietycanada.com](http://www.anxietycanada.com)

## Coping Calendar: Keep Calm. Stay Wise. Be Kind.

**30 actions to look after ourselves and each other as we face this global crisis together.**

- |  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <b>1.</b> Make a plan to help you keep calm and stay in contact    | <b>2.</b> Enjoy washing your hands. Remember all they do for you!        | <b>3.</b> Write down ten things you feel grateful for in life and why    | <b>4.</b> Stay hydrated, eat healthy food and boost your immune system    |
| <b>5.</b> Get active. Even if you're stuck indoors, move & stretch | <b>6.</b> Contact a neighbour or friend and offer to help them           | <b>7.</b> Share what you are feeling and be willing to ask for help      | <b>8.</b> Take five minutes to sit still and breathe. Repeat regularly    |
| <b>9.</b> Call a loved one to catch up and really listen to them   | <b>10.</b> Get good sleep. No screens before bed or when waking up       | <b>11.</b> Notice five things that are beautiful in the world around you | <b>12.</b> Immerse yourself in a new book, TV show or podcast             |
| <b>13.</b> Respond positively to everyone you interact with        | <b>14.</b> Play a game that you enjoyed when you were younger            | <b>15.</b> Make some progress on a project that matters to you           | <b>16.</b> Rediscover your favourite music that really lifts your spirits |
| <b>17.</b> Learn something new or do something creative            | <b>18.</b> Find a fun way to do an extra 15 minutes of physical activity | <b>19.</b> Do three acts of kindness to help others, however small       | <b>20.</b> Make time for self-care. Do something kind for yourself        |
| <b>21.</b> Send a letter or message to someone you can't be with   | <b>22.</b> Find positive stories in the news and share these with others | <b>23.</b> Have a tech-free day. Stop scrolling and turn off the news    | <b>24.</b> Put your worries into perspective and try to let them go       |
| <b>25.</b> Look for the good in others and notice their strengths  | <b>26.</b> Take a small step towards an important goal                   | <b>27.</b> Thank three people you're grateful to and tell them why       | <b>28.</b> Make a plan to meet up with others again later in the year     |
|  | <b>29.</b> Connect with nature. Breathe and notice life continuing       | <b>30.</b> Remember that all feelings and situations pass in time        |   |



## World Health Organization: Coping with Stress During COVID-19



### Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.

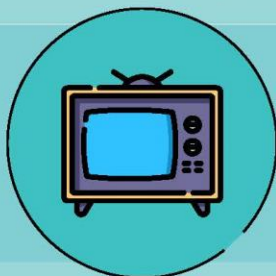
If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.



Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.

If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.



Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.

Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.





## World Health Organization: Helping Children Cope with Stress During COVID-19



World Health Organization

### Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



Children may respond to stress in different ways such as being more clingy, anxious, withdrawing, angry or agitated, bedwetting etc.

Respond to your child's reactions in a supportive way, listen to their concerns and give them extra love and attention.

Children need adults' love and attention during difficult times. Give them extra time and attention.

Remember to listen to your children, speak kindly and reassure them.

If possible, make opportunities for the child to play and relax.



Try and keep children close to their parents and family and avoid separating children and their caregivers to the extent possible. If separation occurs (e.g. hospitalization) ensure regular contact (e.g. via phone) and re-assurance.

Keep to regular routines and schedules as much as possible, or help create new ones in a new environment, including school/learning as well as time for safely playing and relaxing.



Provide facts about what has happened, explain what is going on now and give them clear information about how to reduce their risk of being infected by the disease in words that they can understand depending on their age.

This also includes providing information about what could happen in a re-assuring way (e.g. a family member and/or the child may start not feeling well and may have to go to the hospital for some time so doctors can help them feel better).

## Additional Mental Health and Wellbeing Resources

If you need mental health or wellbeing resources, there are many options available in BC:

### Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

EAP is provided as part of most employer benefits (free for the employee), and it offers counselling for members and their dependents around various issues including depression, anxiety, as well as various e-learning courses and 24/7 telephone counselling and crisis support.

Reach out to your Human Resources department for your company's EAP phone number

For BCMEA employees, you can reach EAP 24/7 toll free at: **1-800-663-1142**

- You also have access to "Best Doctors" which has a mental health navigator tool. This is accessed through:
  - <https://bestdoctors.com/canada/canadalife/>
  - Toll free: 1-877-419-2378

### BC211

BC211 is a confidential, multilingual telephone and texting service, providing free information and referral to a range of community, social, and government services. It operates 24/7, and is a great option for finding resources in your area.

Dial 2-1-1, or

Visit [www.bc211.ca](http://www.bc211.ca)

### HealthLink BC

HealthLink BC provides reliable and confidential non-emergency health information and advice in BC 24/7. Information is available by telephone, website, mobile app and a collection of print resources.

- Dial 8-1-1 toll-free in BC to reach HealthLink BC\*
- Dial 7-1-1 toll free in BC to reach HealthLink BC for the deaf and hard of hearing

\*Translation services are available in more than 130 languages.

Or visit [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca).

### Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre

The Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre provides confidential, non-judgmental, free emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

310-6789 (area code not required – for mental health support)

604 872-3311 (Greater Vancouver)

Toll free: 1-866-661-3311

1 800 SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)

visit [www.crisiscentre.bc.ca](http://www.crisiscentre.bc.ca)

visit [www.crisiscentrechat.ca](http://www.crisiscentrechat.ca) (operates daily from noon – 1:00am)

visit [www.youthinbc.com](http://www.youthinbc.com) (operates daily from noon – 1:00am)

### Aboriginal Crisis Line

The KUU-US Crisis Response Service provides 24/7 culturally-aware crisis support to Indigenous people in B.C.

Call 1-800-588-8717, or

visit: [www.kuu-uscrisisline.ca](http://www.kuu-uscrisisline.ca).

### Kids Help Phone

Helps youth up to age 20 with emotional wellbeing, physical health, and much more.

Toll-free: 1-800-668-6868 (available 24/7)

Text CONNECT to 686868 (available 24/7)

Live Chat between midnight and 7:00am: <https://kidshelpphone.ca/live-chat/>

**Mental Health Digital Hub**

A provincial website that provides information, services and education and awareness about mental health and substance use for adults, youth and children.

Visit: [www.gov.bc.ca/mentalhealth](http://www.gov.bc.ca/mentalhealth)

**MindHealthBC:**

Provides an online mental health counselling program for those struggling with depression, anxiety, or other mental health or substance use challenges.

Visit [www.mindhealthbc.ca](http://www.mindhealthbc.ca)

**Heretohelp**

Provides information about managing mental illness and maintaining good mental health, including self-management resources and screening self-tests for wellness, mood, anxiety and risky drinking.

[www.heretohelp.bc.ca](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca)

**Additional support resources:**

Access & Assessment Centre: 604-675-3700

Fraser Health Crisis Line: 1-877-820-7444

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Chinese Help Line (10am-10pm): 604-270-8233 (Cantonese); 604-270-8222 (Mandarin)

Chimo Crisis Line (Richmond): 604-279-2273

Interior BC Crisis Line: 1-888-353-2273

Vancouver Island Crisis Line: 1-888-494-3888

Vancouver Island Mental Health & Substance Use Services: 1-888-494-3888

Northern BC Crisis Line (24/7): 1-888-562-1214

Northern BC Mental Health & Substance Use Services: 1-250-622-6310 (Prince Rupert); 1-250-631-4202 (Stewart)

*“Everything can be taken from us but one thing: the freedom to choose our attitude in any given set of circumstances”.*

- Viktor Frankl

## Recommended COVID-19 Resources

If you need reliable, plain language COVID-19 resources, there are many options available:

### Best Doctors and Teladoc

Read plain language medical information relating to COVID-19 and how it differs from a regular cold or flu  
Visit: <https://www.teladoc.ca/coronavirus/>

### Free online COVID-19 self-assessment tool

<https://www.thrive.health/covid19>

Search “**BC COVID-19 Support**” in Google Play or the App Store to stay up-to-date on BC's COVID-19 stats

### World Health Organization

<http://who.int/>

### Flatten the Curve

For plain language information on reducing the impact of COVID-19 at home and in your community, visit: [www.flattenthecurve.com](http://www.flattenthecurve.com)

### BC Government COVID-19 Page

For the most up-to-date non-medical information, including the latest travel restrictions, recommendations on social distancing, and provincial and federal programs:

- Within Canada: 1-888-COVID-19 (1-888-268-4319) - between 7:30am-8:00pm 7 days a week with services in 110 languages
- International calls: 1-604-412-0957
- Text: 1-604-630-0300
- Or visit: [www.gov.bc.ca/COVID19](http://www.gov.bc.ca/COVID19)

### BC Center for Disease Control

Visit for recommendations on protecting yourself and your community:

[www.bccdc.ca/covid19](http://www.bccdc.ca/covid19)

For more information and latest updates on COVID-19 follow the BC Centre for Disease control on Twitter @CDCofBC

### Public Health Agency of Canada

[www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html)

### Government of Canada

[www.canada.ca/coronavirus](http://www.canada.ca/coronavirus)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

Information Line at 1-833-784-4397