

Coping With COVID-19: You're Not Alone

COVID-19 has had a major effect on all our lives. The challenges of the pandemic may have made many people feel stressed or overwhelmed. It's been tough for a lot of people, and if you have certain health conditions -- including mental health conditions -- it may have felt especially tough. But there are ways you can help protect yourself and others against COVID-19 and cope with the pandemic.

COVID-19: The Basics

COVID-19 is an infection that usually starts in your nose, sinuses, and throat. Symptoms typically happen 2 days to 2 weeks after exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19 and can include:

- Fever (temperature over 100°F), chills
- Shortness of breath
- Cough
- Headache
- Muscle or body aches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Sore throat
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Loss of smell or taste
- Night sweats



Anyone can get COVID-19, even people who've had it before, have been treated for it, or have been vaccinated against it. Most people will have mild or no symptoms and recover in a few weeks. But others -- even those who just had mild illness -- can have symptoms for weeks or months. COVID-19 can also be severe for some people and even deadly.

Protecting Yourself and Others

The best way to help protect yourself and others is by getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Other ways to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 include:

- Wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth
- Wash your hands often and thoroughly
- Stay 6 feet away from others and avoid crowds and places with poor ventilation
- Clean surfaces regularly, especially after you have visitors in your home
- Monitor your health
 - If you have symptoms or think you've been exposed to COVID-19, get tested
 - If you test positive, quarantine and contact your doctor

Looking Out for Your Mental Well-Being

While social distancing and quarantining are necessary precautions to help keep everyone safe and healthy, they can also make you feel lonely and isolated. Increased stress and anxiety during the pandemic have also been common for a lot of people. All of this means that looking out for your mental well-being can be even more important.

Ways to do this can include:

- **Stick to your treatment plan:** Take all medicines as directed and be sure to get your refills. Ask your pharmacy if they deliver so it's easier to get your medicines
- **Create a schedule:** Having a routine to follow can help you stay organized and on track
- **Find ways to manage stress:** Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate
- **Maintain a healthy lifestyle:** Stay physically active, eat a well-balanced diet, and avoid alcohol and drugs
- **Get enough sleep:** 7 to 8 hours each night can help you feel recharged and refreshed
- **Keep a journal or diary:** Track your symptoms and record how you're feeling. This can be especially helpful for when you're speaking to your doctor
- **Don't skip appointments:** Be sure to keep all medical and therapy appointments. Ask your doctor or therapist if they offer telemedicine or other types of appointments to make it easier to stay on track
- **Stay connected to people:** Find ways, such as phone calls or video chats, to keep in touch with family and friends to talk, laugh, and share experiences. You can also ask your doctor about virtual support groups
- **But be sure to unplug:** Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to the news and social media. Also be sure to limit screen time and disconnect from your phone, tv, and computer for certain periods each day

