



COVID-19 PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLNESS GUIDE:
PERSONS OUTSIDE THE HOSPITAL SETTING WITH
OR SUSPECTED OF HAVING COVID-19

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If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, have been tested for the virus, or if your healthcare provider believes that you may have the virus, you and your family are likely very frightened, scared, and confused. However, there are steps you can take to feel empowered and persevere through the challenges that you are experiencing and that lie ahead. You are not alone and there are active things you can do to help you and your loved ones cope with this challenging and stressful situation. One of the first steps to feeling more empowered is to review thoroughly information from the [CDC](#), your local health department or your provider on what to expect, how to manage symptoms and to clearly understand how the disease is spread and what you can do to prevent its spread. It is very important that you have your questions answered by the doctors and nurses caring for you and you seek out reliable information. Either be an advocate for yourself or identify someone whom you trust to advocate on your behalf. We present additional tips below to help manage the fear, anxiety, stress individuals who have COVID-19 or who are suspected of having the virus may experience. Helpful resources also are included.

Get Support from Others

- Remember while you should physically distance yourself from others while you have symptoms – this does not mean you have to be socially distant!
- Be your own best advocate
 - Ask for what you need from your support system –have clear ways loved ones can support you can help them feel less anxious and powerless
 - Reach out to neighbors or local support services through the local department of health and local community or religious organizations if you feel like your support system is small
- Reach out to different people for different kinds of support
 - Determine who to reach out to for practical help, who to reach out to for emotional or moral support, who to reach out to if you want to have fun or relax, etc.
 - Pick one person (healthcare proxy) that your healthcare team can communicate with about your mental and physical health - this person should be responsible for speaking with other family and friends that you want to be updated



- Use technology to connect with family, friends, and co-workers, and receive the support you need

Attend to Your Emotional Health

- Take charge of your fears and anxieties
 - Engage in deep breathing, if you can do so, when your thoughts race and at regular points during the day to pause and regroup
 - Listen to mindfulness or meditation apps regularly
 - Name or write down your anxieties and fears
 - Remind yourself it is normal to be scared, anxious, and concerned about infecting others
 - Remind yourself you can take steps to prevent the spread, but it is not your fault if your family or friends get sick
 - Remember the physical and emotional pain you are feeling is temporary
 - Notice if you are predicting what is going to happen in the future and try to stick to the facts you know and the present situation
 - Notice if you are constantly thinking of the worst-case scenario regarding your health and write out all the other scenarios that could happen including the best-case scenario
 - Think of other stressful and challenging situations you have encountered and what helped you get through those situations and use those same skills
- Keep a journal focused on your experience of having COVID-19
- Find activities to distract yourself and engage in tasks as physically able (e.g., read a book or listen to an audiobook, do a puzzle, play a game online with a friend, knit, learn a new language online, write to friends)
- Limit your unhealthy behaviors (e.g., using substances, engaging in impulsive or risky behaviors, eating unhealthy foods, sleeping too much) and try to replace these with positive wellness and coping strategies
- Engage in spiritual or religious activities (if pertinent to you)
- Share information with children as developmentally appropriate and offer realistic reassurance to them
- Seek professional psychological help if you feel overwhelmed emotionally or psychologically by having COVID-19



Prioritize your Health and Well-Being

- Recognize you need to (temporarily) prioritize your health above other duties
 - Remind yourself caring for yourself physically is not selfish
 - Monitor both your physical health and emotional health or stress level and limit workload accordingly – only pertinent if you have very mild symptoms and want to engage in work activities remotely
- Follow your doctor's guidelines on symptom tracking and management:
 - Remember, getting rest, eating healthy foods, drinking plenty of water, and, getting adequate sleep at night are critical to both your physical and your emotional health
 - Focus on the small steps you can take to improve your health rather than getting caught in the uncertainty and frustration of not being able to do more
 - Keep yourself comfortable physically and surround yourself with things that make you smile such as pictures of family
 - Move as much as you feel able to do, without overdoing it
- Stay informed about COVID-19
 - Choose from one or two reliable resources listed below to get your information about the symptoms of COVID-19
 - Do not spend all your time being exposed to the media or talking about COVID-19
- Stay in close contact with your healthcare providers
- Develop a clear plan with family or caregivers about how and when to seek additional care based on a health provider's recommendations
 - Know how and when you or a caregiver should get in touch with your healthcare providers
 - Ask questions to ensure you have a good understanding of your illness, treatment plan, and the potential complications to be on the lookout for
 - Persist in asking your provider for clarification or additional information as needed
 - Look back at the plan and remind yourself (or family members) that you are doing the best you can and are following expert recommendations – especially important when you feel anxious

Keep Others Safe: Prevent the Spread - The following suggestions are not a full list of steps you need to take

- Follow the [CDC](#) and your doctor's recommendations to prevent spreading the virus
- Develop an isolation plan with the individuals you are living with that emphasizes safety and is achievable based on your circumstances and everyone agrees to



- Visualize the spread of the virus via touch by thinking of yourself having wet paint on your hands and having as your goal keeping the paint from getting on anyone else and/or getting in anyone else's nose, mouth or eyes.
- Ask for help cleaning if feeling weak and follow guidelines on how to make sure the person helping you stays safe such as not touching their face, washing their clothes directly afterwards or using a disposable gown, taking a shower and thoroughly washing hands or using gloves and quickly disposing of them (remember its about keeping the "paint" from getting into their nose, face or eyes or other clean surfaces)
- Wear a mask when around others
- Use alternatives that the CDC has listed as effective (Noted as of April 10th 2020-check CDC for updates) if you cannot find gloves, medical masks, or other cleaning supplies to keep others safe and reduce your anxiety
 - Use cloth masks if you cannot access medical masks
 - Remember soap and water is effective (wash hands for minimum of 20 seconds) and actually your best option if hands or surfaces are visibly dirty
 - Wash your hands properly (i.e., after any time you touch something dirty and before you ever touch your face or something clean) if you don't have gloves and then you don't need to worry
 - Remember gloves are just keeping you from getting your hands dirty - if you touch your face or clean surfaces with dirty gloves it's just like touching them with dirty hands!
- Limit your contact with animals as a safety precaution even though there have been no reports of pets becoming sick with COVID-19 in the United States
 - Note there is no current evidence that domestic animals can spread the illness to humans

Helpful Resources

General Information about COVID-19:

- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>
- WHO: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- Emory: <https://www.emory.edu/coronavirus/>
- Emory LGS: <https://www.gs.emory.edu/>
- SAMHSA: <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/tips-social-distancing-quarantine-isolation-031620.pdf>



COVID-19 related Anxiety and Psychological Coping:

- Local COVID-19 emotional support lines
 - Georgia – 866-399-8938
- CDC Coping Resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
- CDC Dealing with a Traumatic Event: <https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/index.asp>
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/index.asp>
- General Recommendations: <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-cope-with-coronavirus-covid-19-anxiety-psychologist-2020-2>
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Self Help Brochures: <http://counseling-center.illinois.edu/node/376>
- SAMHSA: <https://www.samhsa.gov/coronavirus>
- Psychology Tools: <https://www.psychologytools.com/psychological-resources-for-coronavirus-covid-19/>