

COVID-19 (Coronavirus): Coping with Uncertainty

News continues to stream in about the growing concerns related to the outbreak of the Coronavirus. While obtaining information about the virus is critically important, it can also be overwhelming and hard to filter. It's natural to want to know, "What should I be doing? How can I protect myself and my loved ones? Am I being overly concerned?"

In a word, we're all left feeling "uncertain." There is no "right way" to think or feel about what's happening with this outbreak, but it is important to acknowledge your own, unique reactions. Doing so can go a long way in helping you manage the common, and *normal* feelings many of us are likely to experience, including, but not limited to: insecurity, anxiety, dread, powerlessness and concern for loved ones.

As employees of the County of Ventura, we are fortunate to have access to accurate, real-time information. Our Leadership, Public Health Department, and Infectious Disease experts are monitoring the situation closely, and are linked with public health and CDC officials to keep our workforce apprised of the status and impact of the virus.

Things You Can Do:

Stay informed – It is important to stay informed, but avoid media over-saturation. Be aware of how you and members of your family are reacting to the continuous coverage and protect them and yourself regarding TV, radio, the internet and newspapers.

Talk – Talking, as the situation unfolds, gives us the opportunity to identify and share our personal reactions. Discussion helps us better understand and acknowledge the impact of the circumstances and helps prevent isolation. Connect with your support system – family, friends, colleagues – and talk with them.

Be aware of the emotional impact on yourself and those around you – Everyone's emotions are closer to the surface at this time. Tempers can be shorter, children clingy, and society (as a whole) more on edge. Children, in particular, have "radar" that picks up everything in their environment. They may need more physical contact, assurance, time and patience.

Take action – Don't let fear or anxiety keep you stuck. Transform your troubling thoughts and feelings into healthy behaviors, like exercise or meditation. Find wellness activities or online resources such as podcasts or programs that can help you relax and reduce stress (among other things). Increase activities which are healing for you such as: time with your family, time outdoors, hobbies, getting together with friends, meditation and prayer. Also remember to keep a mixture of activity and relaxation. Maintain as normal a routine as possible.

Know the Signs of Stress

What follows are behavioral, physical, emotional, and cognitive responses that are all common signs of anxiety and stress. You may notice some of them after you learn about an infectious disease outbreak.

Signs of Stress May Include:

| Your Behavior | Your Body | Your Emotions | Your Thinking |
|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An increase or decrease in your energy and activity levels - An increase in your alcohol, tobacco use, or use of illegal drugs - An increase in irritability, with outbursts of anger and frequent arguing - Having trouble relaxing or sleeping - Crying frequently - Worrying excessively - Wanting to be alone most of the time - Blaming other people for everything - Having difficulty communicating or listening - Having difficulty giving or accepting help - Inability to feel pleasure or have fun | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having stomachaches or diarrhea - Having headaches and other pains - Losing your appetite or eating too much - Sweating or having chills - Getting tremors or muscle twitches - Being easily startled | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being anxious or fearful - Feeling depressed - Feeling guilty - Feeling angry - Feeling heroic, euphoric, or invulnerable - Not caring about anything - Feeling overwhelmed by sadness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having trouble remembering things - Feeling confused - Having trouble thinking clearly and concentrating - Having difficulty making decisions |

Know When To Get Help

You may experience serious distress when you hear about an infectious disease outbreak, even if you are at little or no risk of getting sick. If you are showing signs of stress, get help by calling the Employee Assistance Program at (805) 654-4327. If you or someone you know has thoughts of suicide, you can call the Suicide Prevention Hotline (800) 273-8255 or the Ventura County Crisis Team (866) 998-2243.

What other precautions should I take?

At home, consider reviewing your emergency plan to be prepared for any unexpected emergency and consider how you might protect the rest of your family if one of you gets sick.

If your reaction to the Coronavirus outbreak is interfering with any aspect of your personal or professional life, please contact EAP at (805) 654-4327.



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