



## How to Cope with Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks

When you hear about an outbreak of an infectious disease such as COVID-19, you may feel anxious and show signs of stress. This is completely normal, but can interfere with normal, everyday functioning. During the outbreak of an infectious disease, it is important to monitor your own physical and mental health and become aware of the signs of stress. Also, it is important to know how to relieve stress and when to reach out for help.

### Signs of Stress:

Stress can manifest in a variety of ways. It can impact individuals behaviorally, physically, emotionally, or cognitively. You may notice some of the signs present after learning about an outbreak, and it is important to learn to recognize the signs that may be present in you and your loved ones.

#### Behavior:

- Increase or decrease in energy and activity levels
- Increase in use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs
- Increase in irritability or anger
- Difficulty relaxing or sleeping
- Frequent crying
- Excessive worry
- Isolation
- Blaming others
- Difficulty communicating effectively
- Inability to feel pleasure or have fun
- Sweats and/or chills
- Tremors or muscle twitches
- Easily startled

#### Emotional:

- Increased anxiety or fear
- Feeling depressed or hopeless
- Anger/Resentment
- Feeling guilty
- Feeling euphoric or invincible
- Lack of concern or worry
- Overwhelming feeling of sadness

#### Physical:

- Upset stomach
- Frequent headaches
- Loss of appetite or overeating

#### Cognitive:

- Difficulty remembering things
- Confusion
- Difficulty thinking clearly
- Difficulty concentrating
- Trouble with decision-making

**Relieving Stress:**

- Set limits on how much time you spend reading or watching about the outbreak
- Find people and resources with accurate health information
- Eat healthy foods
- Drink lots of water
- Avoid excessive amounts of caffeine or alcohol
- Get physical exercise
- Get adequate amount of sleep
- Take time to relax
- Meditate/pray
- Stretch
- Take deep breaths
- Engage in hobbies
- Talk to loved ones about feelings
- Take breaks when feeling overwhelmed
- Pay attention to your own body

LifeServices EAP provides **free and confidential** counseling, including coping with stress, anxiety, and mental wellness, amongst other life issues. If you or a family member need assistance please visit our webpage for additional information at [www.lifeserviceseap.com](http://www.lifeserviceseap.com) or call 800-822-4847 to schedule an appointment.