



Atlantic Health System

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Message for dealing with COVID19

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In the past few weeks, the United States has been rocked in the wake of COVID19, the disease caused by a virus known as SARS-COV-2. Physical symptoms of this virus, per the Centers for Disease Control, include fevers, cough and shortness of breath. As serious as the physical ramifications of this illness are, the emotional and psychological impact on our country has been startling. Anxiety appears to be as widespread and, perhaps, more contagious than the illness. People are resorting to behaviors that generally occur during wartime, such as hoarding food and supplies. New terms such as “social distancing” and “flattening the curve” are a part of our everyday vernacular now.

We are all working on finding our “new normal”. Our new world requires us to be more adaptable than we’ve known in our lifetimes. It is important to note that while we are always adjusting to this “new normal”, we may occasionally experience a sense of anxiety about the pandemic. The CDC states that symptoms of anxiety and stress during a pandemic are common and can include the following:

- Preoccupation about your own health and/or the health of your loved ones
- Difficulty with sleeping or changes in appetite. Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health or mental health problems
- Increased craving or use of alcohol, drugs or engaging in more addictive behaviors

While we are all experiencing this pandemic in different ways, it is important to note that there is hope. We can engage in behaviors to combat the emotional impact of this pandemic. The CDC also provides us with guidelines for how to cope healthily with outbreak associated stress:

- Be mindful of your media consumption. Limit your exposure to the media to 20 minutes per day – this includes social media. Avoid listening to “opinions” about this health crisis. Get your information from valid sources, such as the CDC, National Institute of Health, or World Health Organization. Excessively exposing yourself to information about the pandemic can be upsetting.
- Take care of your physical health. Work on eating healthy, well balanced meals. Take deep breaths often – they’re free and they’re good for you! Get plenty of sleep. Exercise, take a walk (being mindful of keeping physical distance between yourself and others). Avoid alcohol and drugs, especially as a way to cope with this stress.

- Be sure to set aside time to unwind and relax. Because we are spending more time alone, we may find we have time for hobbies that have taken a back seat. Dance, make art, cook, bake – be actively creative.
- Keep in mind that “social distancing” does not have to mean isolating from each other. Use technology to connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- Remind yourself that this is a temporary situation. So many unknowns lead us to feel overwhelmed, but reminding ourselves of our resilience and our fortitude will help ground us during times of uncertainty.

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