



In these times of uncertainty, it can be helpful to have a place to go to find information. We hope this document will be a useful resource to answer some questions you may have and give you some tips on how to support your mental health through these trying times.

[What is Coronavirus and what do I Need to Know?](#)

- [What can I do?](#)
- [Self-isolation and social distancing](#)
- [Myths and facts](#)

[Keeping Busy](#)

[Supporting Good Mental Health](#)

- [Tips for mental health](#)
- [Mindfulness](#)
- [Is how I'm feeling normal? \(Plus resources\)](#)

[What is Coronavirus and what do I Need to Know?](#)

The Coronavirus is actually a large family of viruses that cause a variety of symptoms from the common cold to more acute and severe respiratory illnesses. COVID-19 (Corona Virus Disease 2019) is a new form of the virus that we have never seen before. It's highly contagious, spreads rapidly, and results in anything from no symptoms to a slight cold to severe respiratory distress, organ failure and death. You might have heard that young people are most likely to experience few to no symptoms and while this is true, there have been reported deaths in younger people. Older people, people with compromised immune systems, and those with other conditions (asthma being one of them) are at a higher risk for fatal complications.

Want to watch a video about it to learn more? Check out the Corona Virus Explained & What You Should Do from Kurzgesagt. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtN-goy9VOY>

[What can I do?](#)

First, and most importantly, stay safe! Monitor yourself for symptoms daily and wash your hands often. Self-isolate if you have been told to or if you have travelled outside of the country and otherwise practice social distancing.

- Each day you should be checking to see if you are starting to feel sick, especially if you have a sore throat, fever, or shortness of breath. If you do feel sick or have any symptoms at all call telehealth and your local public health unit. Don't panic and run to the hospital until you are told to (that's a hotbed for germs" but immediately self-isolate until you are given further instructions.

- Telehealth Ontario number 1-866-797-0000
- Make sure to wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds with soap and water. Soap is really important because it destroys the oily surface of the virus and kills it preventing it from entering your body. Hand sanitizer can help but it's not as effective as soap.
- The virus enters your body mainly through your eyes, nose and mouth so try not to touch your face, especially if you haven't washed your hands in a while.

Self-isolation and Social Distancing

These words are tossed around a lot lately. Are you sure you know what they mean? If you have come into contact with the virus, have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have travelled out of the country, you need to self-isolate. This means staying away from everyone. Essentially on lockdown in a different room of the house than anyone else to prevent the spread to others. Have your meals left outside your door, use a separate bathroom if you have one, limit any kind of in person contact with others, use the kitchen when others aren't in there and disinfect thoroughly afterwards. Stay inside. Stay alone. For 14 days.

Sounds like prison right? Yep. Let's try to stop that from happening. The best way to prevent coming into contact with the virus is through social distancing. Social distancing is a less intense form of self-isolation but it does mean some specific things like leaving your house only for the essentials, going for a walk or run outside is ok, no more hangouts with people outside of the people you live with (that includes friends or anyone you're in a relationship with.) When you do leave the house stay 2 meters, or six feet, away from other people.

Here's a great video from It's Okay To Be Smart on how important social distancing is for all of us and what it means to "flatten the curve".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgBla7RepXU>

But it's also summed up nicely in this picture. If one match is lit, it will keep setting the others on fire, much like the virus passes from person to person. If one match removes itself from the row the fire has to burn out.



The reality is that the sooner we're able to get this pandemic under control, the sooner you'll be able to get back to your lives. We all have a part to do, but if you guys don't do yours, this will take longer and it will be more dangerous for everyone.

Myths and facts

There is a LOT of misinformation being spread about COVID-19 and that can add to a lot of panic and uncertainty. Here are just a couple of myths that are out there.

If you can hold your breath for 10 seconds, you don't have a Coronavirus infection. Nope. This is a “test” people were using to see if you had an infection that damaged your lungs. It's not true. If you have a cough you might not be able to hold your breath but might not have coronavirus, and some people have the virus but no symptoms.

5G causes Coronavirus. Yes, as in the wireless service your phones might be running on. This is not true. Wireless networks cannot cause or spread viruses. This just goes to show how strange some of the myths that are out there can be, and how easy they are to believe if you aren't informed.

Warm weather will stop the spread of the virus. Unfortunately this is not the case. If it were, southern countries wouldn't be experiencing outbreaks. Cold weather won't stop it either.

Using a facemask will protect you from getting the virus. Surgical masks can't block airborne viruses. They're specifically designed to prevent fluids from someone else's cough or sneeze getting into your mouth and nose, or prevent fluid from your coughs and sneezes from getting into someone else's airways.

Spraying alcohol or bleach on your body will prevent you from being infected. That's not how this works. The WHO says that not only can spraying bleach or rubbing alcohol on your body harm your mucous membranes, it won't protect you from getting the coronavirus.

Dr. Mike does a great job shutting down some of the other incorrect information so have a watch!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-jkAfafm5I>

Keeping Busy

Okay, the chances are that you aren't going to get sick or die from Coronavirus. That's great news! But with everything shutting down and people being forced to stay inside you're mostly going to have a lot of time on your hands and once the worry starts to fade or staying home gets old you're going to be BORED! So what kinds of things can you do?

Take care of your physical health. You're not getting as much exercise as you're used to, so find ways to move – go for a walk or a run, find a workout online (lots of YouTube channels have free videos with great HIIT workouts that don't require any equipment) and the YMCA is opening up free online videos as well. Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet and keep hydrated.

Connect with people Social distancing means that we need to be physically separate, not socially disconnected. Call people, have online hangouts, talk about things other than just the pandemic. We need to connect with people now more than ever and we're lucky to have the technology to help us do that.

Learn something new. Learn to play an instrument if you have one hanging around, get on Duolingo and try learning a new language. Sign up for a free class on Coursera. These things can be good short term fun, and let's face it, you're going to need a few distractions. You might even end up picking up a new hobby.

Set a goal for yourself. Maybe that's reading a book, being able to do 50 pushups, or learning how to cook something new. No matter what it is, having something to work toward can help pass the time. And to be honest, you'll probably never have this much time to do something new until you're retired.

Supporting Good Mental Health

Tips for mental health

Mental health should always be a priority, but it's even more so in times of distress and uncertainty. There are a few things you can do to help make sure you're keeping yourself as healthy as possible right now.

Get up and get out of bed. And shower. Please. Maintaining a sense of normal routine including waking up and getting dressed at a reasonable time every day will help you feel better and more in control.

Limit your screen time. Increased use of social media has been linked with things like poor sleep, lowered attention span, poor self-esteem, increases in anxiety and depression, and poor memory. Not to mention the eye strain that will come from naturally using your devices more since you have fewer reasons to put them down. So make some time to do things that don't require a screen.

Don't continuously read, listen to, or talk about the news. You can't look anywhere right now without reading or seeing something about the impact of the Coronavirus. There is a lot of bad news out there and it can be overwhelming and make the situation feel too big and a bit hopeless. Taking a break from that is important. That might also mean telling people you don't want to talk about the pandemic and respecting other people when they say they don't want to talk about it. And make sure that the information you're consuming isn't making you feel worse. If it is, find something else to do online.

Times of Peace

Seek out safe places to have a time of peace and quiet, explore your faith and belief systems. If these have been important parts of your life, use them to draw hope and strength. Take time to read Psalm 23.

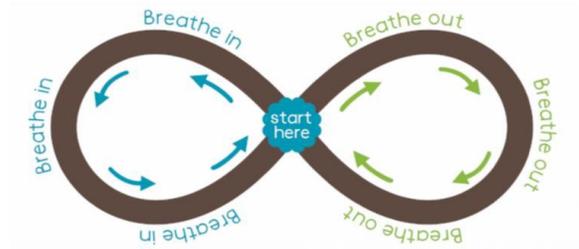
Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a skill that can help to calm your mind and stop it from thinking too much about the past and future. It's about being in the present moment and paying attention to what is happening right now. If your thoughts are out of control (or you're feeling that you just can't focus on anything) this might help to relax you and reduce those feelings of anxiety. Here are two activities you can try:

ACKNOWLEDGE:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

WELLNESS
RESOURCE CENTER



And if you want some more options, CMHAWW has put out a whole list of different things to try: <https://cmhaww.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Grounding-Activities.pdf>

Is how I'm feeling normal?

It is natural to feel a little less than wonderful with everything that is going on right now. If you're starting to feel distressed, see if some of the strategies above can help. If you're feeling down and things aren't getting better, reach out. You can call the Coping Centre at 877-554-4498 and they will connect you to someone in your area that can help.

If you are in crisis you can also call -

- Crisis and distress support in your area by googling a local support line
- Canada's suicide prevention hotline at 1-833-456-4566 at any time or by texting "Start" to 45645 between 4pm and midnight
- KidsHelpPhone at 800-668-6868 (Or through their texting service at 686868) 24 hours a day
- Good2Talk for secondary school students at 866-925-5454
- The Coping Centre 877-554-4498 Monday to Thursday 9am to 4pm

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