



ANXIETY During Covid-19 Crisis

Anxiety is a normal emotion to uncertainty and serves as a signal to pay attention so we can protect ourselves from things that may harm us. Anxiety alerts us. It prompts us to adapt. For many of us, the coronavirus and the COVID-19 illness make for a very uncertain future.

If you feel stressed about coronavirus, you're not alone. Coronavirus (COVID-19) has had ripple effects into almost every aspect of our lives. With schools and workplaces closed for now, it's affected the way we live every day. So much has changed in such a short time. It's natural to feel anxiety when we face a crisis, the unknown, or sudden change. It's a normal reaction to feel the need for safety, certainty, predictability, and control.

What Is Anxiety?

Anxiety is your body's natural response to stress. It's a feeling of fear or apprehension about what's to come. Anxiety is a normal and often healthy emotion, but when we're overwhelmed by anxiety, it can do harm. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines anxiety as "an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure."

Symptoms of Anxiety

Anxiety feels different depending on the person experiencing it. Feelings can range from butterflies in your stomach to a racing heart. You might feel out of control, like there is a disconnect between your mind and body. Sometimes you feel too much worry, or you can't stop worrying, and as a result it is difficult to focus and think clearly. Other symptoms might include:

- Nervousness, restlessness, or being tense
- Rapid or increased heart rate
- Increased or heavy sweating
- Have trouble relaxing
- Have trouble sleeping
- Feelings of fear, danger, panic, or dread
- Rapid breathing
- Trembling or muscle twitching
- Muscle tension
- Easily fatigued, weakness, and lethargy

Self-help Suggestions

Lifestyle changes can be an effective way to relieve some of the stress and anxiety you and your children feel every day. Most of the natural "remedies" consist of caring for your body, participating in healthy activities, and eliminating unhealthy ones. These include:

- Get enough sleep
- Eat a healthy diet
- Stay active and exercise
- Maintain a routine as best you can
- Connect with family and friends
- Deep breathing exercises and relaxation techniques
- Focus on the positive and be thankful
- Avoid caffeine, tobacco products, and alcohol
- Go outdoors – sunshine, fresh air, enjoy nature's beauty

Ways to Support Your Child During Covid-19

- **Talk with and listen intently to your child or teen** about the COVID-19 outbreak.
- **Answer questions** and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- **Reassure your child or teen** that they are safe. Let them know it is OK if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- **Limit your family's exposure to news coverage** of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- **Try to keep up with regular routines.** If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- **Be a role model.** Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

Resources

- Healthline
 - <https://www.healthline.com/health/anxiety>
- Mayo Clinic
 - <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/anxiety/symptoms-causes/syc-20350961>
- Medical News Today
 - <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/323454>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
- HelpGuide
 - <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/coronavirus-anxiety.htm>
- KidsHealth
 - <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/coronavirus-calm.html>
- Child Mind Institute
 - <https://childmind.org/article/what-to-do-and-not-do-when-children-are-anxious/>

IMPORTANT! Know when to reach out for help. If your anxiety seems overwhelming — if you're having trouble sleeping, eating, or interacting in the ways you normally would — get help. Most behavioral health providers are offering telehealth visits during this time and can schedule with new patients. Don't be afraid to reach out for help during this stressful time!

For more information, please contact your Regional ESC or email Robin Terry at
robin.terry@esc16.net; 806-677-5157