

How to Cope with Anxiety about Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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Facts not fear:

- It's important to protect yourself and your loved ones against all viruses, including COVID-19 by frequently washing your hands for 20 seconds, staying home when you are sick, and covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow/upper arm.

Stay calm:

- It's important to not pass along or spread misinformation. Recognize when other people's fears and anxieties are influencing your own emotional or mental health. When we integrate other's fears and anxieties into our own emotional or mental state, we act and make decisions out of fear, rather than facts.

Keep up-to-date:

- For topics that cause significant anxiety, people find themselves better able to cope if they feel knowledgeable about the topic. Use trusted resources, such as the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) and the [Iowa Department of Public Health](#) (IDPH).

Unplug:

- Information, real or fake, is a constant in today's society. It is important to have the facts and stay up-to-date, but when information creates a barrier to daily functioning, it can increase fear and anxiety. Be aware of how plugged in you are and to what you are exposing yourself.

Prioritize good sleep, exercise and healthy eating choices:

- Stress affects your immune system response. Make a list of priorities and include commitments to 8 hours of sleep, adequate exercise and healthy eating choices.

Focus on Preparedness:

- Be informed; be educated. One way to address anxiety is to focus on the circumstances you can control. Taking efforts to control what you can, like washing your hands and other prevention strategies, will help to lessen the stress caused by the fear of the unknown. Both the CDC and IDPH websites have resources on prevention and preparedness.

When do you need help?

- When symptoms associated with your anxiety have affected your ability to function in some part of your life, it is time to reach out. Does worry cause you to lose sleep or does the fear of becoming sick cause you to isolate? Reach out to your healthcare provider and discuss your concerns. If you or a loved one are facing problems with alcohol, drugs, gambling, mental health or suicidal thoughts, contact Your Life Iowa by live chat, text (855-895-8398) or phone (855-581-8111).