

Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks

A disease outbreak can be stressful. Feeling overwhelmed, sad, anxious and afraid, or experiencing other symptoms of distress, such as trouble sleeping, is natural. Know the signs of stress, how to relieve stress, and when to get help.

You can reduce the negative impact of stress by anticipating normal reactions, practicing stress-reducing activities, and seeking help. Take a moment to read these tips for coping.

Take Care of Yourself

Stress can affect the way you think, feel and act. Most of the effects are normal reactions to distressing events and are generally short-lived. By taking care of yourself, you can reduce stress and deal more effectively with difficult situations. Here are some of the symptoms you may experience and some strategies for dealing with them.

How Stress Can Affect You

- **Physical effects.** Normal reactions to stress include fatigue, exhaustion, headaches and rapid heartbeat. Stress can also aggravate preexisting medical conditions.
- **Emotional effects.** Stress can cause feelings of anger, agitation and irritability. Some people may experience depression or anxiety.
- **Mental effects.** Symptoms can include confusion, forgetfulness and difficulty concentrating or making decisions. People under stress may start to question their basic beliefs.
- **Behavioral effects.** Stress can trigger uncharacteristic behavior. You may become restless, argumentative or short-tempered. You may feel compelled to work excessively or find yourself eating or sleeping more or less than usual.

How You Can Manage Stress

- **Comfort yourself.** Save time for activities you find relaxing and spend time with people you enjoy.
- **Take care of your body.** Get enough sleep. Eat well and exercise. Avoid drinking excessively or using drugs or tobacco.
- **Pay special attention to your mental health.** Make time to reflect, meditate or pray.
- **Stay connected.** Talk to your family, friends and community.
- **Boost your resiliency.** Focus on your strengths. Stay connected with your support system as much as possible.
- **Take a time-out.** It is okay to take time off and unplug from technology.
- **Manage your workload.** Prioritize your tasks and balance your work and home life. Try to maintain daily routines as much as possible. Take breaks and time off.
- **Reach out.** If you feel overwhelmed, or if you need help coping, you can contact NYC Well, a confidential 24/7 helpline, staffed by trained counselors. They can provide brief counseling and referrals to care in over 200 languages and other resources. Call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), Text "WELL" to 65173, or chat at nyc.gov/nycwell.