

Handling Public Health Emergencies

The information in this brochure can help you cope with anxiety and stress related to public health emergencies.

It's natural to be upset when you think your health – or the health of your loved ones - is threatened.

Pay attention to your feelings and take care of your own emotional needs. By doing this, you can better help friends and family members handle their concerns.

Uncertainty

Anxiety can be caused by fear of the unknown. It's normal to feel anxious and worried about a spreading disease, especially if there's no known cause or cure.



Everyone reacts differently to concerns about their health.

Examples of normal stress reactions include:

Physical Reactions

Headaches	Changes in appetite
Tiredness	Increased heart rate
Trouble sleeping	High blood pressure
Stomach aches	Unexplained aches or pains

Emotional Reactions

Anxiety	Sadness
Distrust	Depression
Fear	Blame
Anger	Feeling overwhelmed
Irritability	Increased stress
Guilt	

Mental Reactions

Problems with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentrating • Remembering • Performing at work • Performing at school 	Troubling thoughts Lack of focus Concerns about health
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Behavioral Reactions

Excessive washing	Misusing/abusing
Excessive cleaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alcohol • street drugs • prescription drugs
Avoiding others	
Increased conflict with others	
Being overly cautious	Spouse abuse Child abuse

Here are some ways you can cope with stress and anxiety:

Educate yourself about the specific health hazard

Get accurate, timely information from reliable sources

Limit your exposure to graphic news stories

Maintain your normal routine, if possible

Stay in touch with family and friends

Stay active – physically and mentally

Exercise, eat well and rest

Find comfort in your spiritual and personal beliefs

Keep a sense of humor

Share your concerns with others



Stay Connected

The fear associated with a public health emergency can push people apart.

People who are normally close to family and friends may avoid contact because they are afraid they might get sick or get someone else sick.

It's important to stay connected with others. Use the phone, e-mail, or other electronic means of communication.

If you are anxious about a health risk, talk to someone who can help. This may be your doctor, a family member, friend, member of the clergy, teacher or mental health professional.

If you notice a big change in a loved one, friend or co-worker, reach out to them. Make some time to talk. Watching out for others shows you care. It can be comforting to both of you.

If you or someone you know is having a hard time managing their emotions, seek help from a medical or mental health professional.

Get Reliable Information

When we face uncertainty about health risks, it's important to keep things in perspective.

Get information during public health emergencies from:

- Your doctor or healthcare provider
- Your local health department
- The CT Department of Public Health at <http://ct.gov/dph/>
- 2-1-1 or 1-800-203-1234
- Connecticut Network of Care at <http://connecticut.networkofcare.org/mh/home>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
 - <http://cdc.gov>
 - 1-800-CDC-INFO (4636) for assistance in English and Spanish
 - TTY: 1-888-232-6348

This publication is available online at <http://ct.gov/dmhas/flu.stress>.

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COPING WITH YOUR EMOTIONS DURING PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES



**Connecticut
Department of
Mental Health and
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And
**Connecticut
Department of
Children & Families**

