OUTLINE

• Specific stressors and common responses to the COVID-19 pandemic

• What is mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)?

• Key messages and resources to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic:
  • Communities
  • Older adults
  • People with disabilities
  • Children
  • Adults in isolation and quarantine
Specific stressors particular to the COVID-19 pandemic are:

The outbreak of COVID-19 may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children.

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include

• Changes in sleep or eating patterns
• Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
• Worsening of chronic health problems
• Worsening of mental health conditions
• Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs
COMMON RESPONSES TO COVID-19 MIGHT INCLUDE:

FEAR OF...
Falling ill, death, losing livelihoods, being separated from loved ones, isolation and quarantine...

FEELINGS OF...
Helplessness, boredom, loneliness, depression, anger, mistrust...

SOCIAL STIGMA...
Towards persons who have been infected and their family members, those caring for patients, specific ethnic groups, population groups or nationalities...
THERE ARE ALSO POSITIVE EXPERIENCES...

- Pride in finding ways of coping and resilience
- Altruism and cooperation
- Satisfaction in helping others

Safety matters for all: patients and health workers

Specialized services
Focused person to person non-specialized supports
Strengthening Community and family supports
Social considerations in basic services and security

COVID-19 adapted interventions
Examples:

- Tele-mental Health or virtual consultations
  Procedures to minimize infection of COVID-19.
  Interventions to be delivered or supported remotely without the need of a provider

- Tele-mental health
  - for people with pre-existing and newly-developed MH conditions including suicide plans or behavior.
  - Frontline Health Workers

- Social connectedness and community-based coping mechanisms for people separated by physical distancing measures are supported (e.g. tele- or social media peer support groups)

- Risk communication,
  Safe and effective communication is reinforced to increase good practices, promote positive coping and wellbeing in the general population and specific target groups
Populations at disproportionate risk in public health emergencies, and key implications for risk communication and community engagement

- Children
- People with disabilities
- Women and girls
- Pregnant women
- People living with HIV
- Gender Based Violence Survivors
- Refugees and Migrants
- Elderly
- People living with pre-MH & Med
- Sexual and Gender Minorities
- Ethnic Minorities
PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

Actions to include:

• Utilize established community systems to facilitate communication with people living with HIV, to avoid treatment disruptions.

• Develop Q /As/FAQs in consultation with the people living with HIV community that respond to their specific vulnerabilities and concerns.

• Where possible, provide multi-month prescriptions to ensure that people living with HIV are able to have a few month’s supply of ARV.

• Suggest that people living with HIV keep a supply of non-perishable food in order that they are able to take their medication.

• Provide psycho-social support to people living with HIV who may already feel anxious, stigmatized and vulnerable.
• It is normal to feel sad, distressed, worried, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.
• Talk to people you trust. Contact your friends and family.
• If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle. Keep in touch with family and friends through email, phone calls and making use of social media platforms.
• Don’t use tobacco, alcohol or other drugs to cope with your emotions.
• If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker, social worker, similar professional, or another trusted person in your community (e.g., religious leader or community elder).
• Have a plan where to go and seek help for physical and mental health and psychosocial needs, if required.
• Get the facts about your risk and how to take precautions. Use credible sources to get information, such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.
• Decrease the time you and your family spend watching or listening to upsetting media coverage.
• Draw on skills that you have used in the past during difficult times to manage your emotions during this outbreak.
PAHO SOCIAL MEDIA POSTCARDS: BE KIND

Be KIND to address fear during #coronavirus
- Show empathy with those affected
- Learn about the disease to assess the risks
- Adopt practical measures to stay safe

Be KIND to address stigma during #coronavirus
- Share the latest facts & avoid hyperbole
- Show solidarity with affected people
- Tell the stories of people who have experienced the virus

Be KIND to support loved ones during #coronavirus
- Check in regularly especially with those affected
- Encourage them to keep doing what they enjoy
- Share PAHO/WHO information to manage anxieties
- Provide calm and correct advice for your children

PAHO SOCIAL MEDIA POSTCARDS: BE SUPPORTIVE

Amplify hopeful stories and positive images of local people who have experienced COVID-19. For example, stories of people who have recovered or who have supported a loved one and are willing to share their experiences.

Protect yourself and be supportive to others. For example, check-in by phone on neighbors or people in your community who may need extra assistance. Working together as one community can help to create solidarity in addressing COVID-19 together.
OLDER ADULTS: KEY MESSAGES

- **Provide practical** and **emotional support** through **informal networks** (families and peers) and health professionals.

- **Share simple facts** about what is going on and give **clear information** about how to reduce the risk of infection in words that older people with/without cognitive impairment can understand. Repeat the information whenever necessary. Instructions need to be communicated in a clear, concise, respectful and patient way.

- **Be prepared** and know in advance **where and how to get practical help** if needed, such as calling a taxi, having food delivered and requesting medical care.

- **Keep regular contact with loved ones** (e.g. via phone or other means).

- **Keep to regular routines and schedules** as much as possible or help create new ones in a new environment, including regular exercising, cleaning, daily chores, singing, painting or other activities.
OLDER ADULTS: RESOURCES

10 WAYS YOU CAN HELP THE ELDERLY AND PEOPLE WITH UNDERLYING CONDITIONS LIVING WITH YOU

- Monitor their health for symptoms of COVID-19, like fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.
- If anyone in the household has symptoms, avoid physical contact and take heightened preventative measures.
- If they have COVID-19 symptoms, contact a healthcare provider immediately.
- Encourage them to maintain a healthy lifestyle: eat nutritious foods, get enough sleep, don’t smoke, stay active and limit alcohol use.
- Regularly clean and disinfect surfaces and keep the house well ventilated.
- Avoid sharing objects like glasses, cutlery and towels.
- Make sure they have at least a month’s stock of all their regular medicines in case it’s necessary to stay home. Encourage them to follow medical advice about medication.
- Follow social distancing measures in your area and avoid shared spaces and large gatherings.
- If going to the doctor, wear a mask, if available, and avoid public transport if possible.
- Be kind and show empathy. Talk and listen to them. Help them cope with stress.

10 WAYS YOU CAN HELP THE ELDERLY AND/OR PEOPLE WITH UNDERLYING CONDITIONS LIVING ALONE

- Check on them frequently, preferably by phone given the risk of transmission.
- If you visit them, maintain a distance of at least 1 meter and avoid physical contact (hugs, kisses).
- Buy groceries, supplies and medicines for them.
- Make sure they have at least a month’s stock of all their regular medicines in case they need to stay home.
- Help them connect with doctors, neighbors, friends and family if needed.
- Remind them to wash their hands frequently, keep objects and surfaces clean, and avoid physical contact with those who are sick.
- Make a plan in case they fall ill and decide how transportation will be arranged to seek health care.
- Encourage them to maintain a healthy lifestyle: eat nutritious foods, get enough sleep, don’t smoke, stay active and limit alcohol use.
- Be kind and show empathy. Talk and listen to them. Help them cope with stress. Once the pandemic is over, you will hug again!
- If your loved one is in a home for the elderly, avoid visits. Use phone, video chat or email to keep in touch.

10 WAYS TO PREPARE AND PROTECT YOURSELF 60+ AND/OR LIVING WITH UNDERLYING CONDITIONS*

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. And regularly clean and disinfect surfaces.
- Keep taking your normal medication and follow medical advice.
- Adopt a healthy lifestyle to help your immune system: eat nutritious foods, get enough sleep, don’t smoke, stay active and limit alcohol use.
- Maintain a distance of at least 1 meter and avoid physical contact (hugs, kisses, etc.) with other people.
- If COVID-19 is spreading in your community, stay home as much as possible. Avoid going to church and other places with a lot of people.
- Make sure you have at least a month’s supply of medicines in case you need to stay home. Plan on how to get more in case you need to stay at home longer.
- Stay in close contact with your family, friends, or neighbors and make a plan on how you’ll keep food and medical care if needed.
- Isolate yourself with COVID-like symptoms, like fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, so you can quickly identify them if they appear.
- If you show COVID-like symptoms, call the assigned phone number in your country or your health care provider immediately.
- Don’t feel lonely. Stay in touch with family and friends by phone, video chat, or email.

*Follow local and country-specific advice.

Disability considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak

In March 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a novel coronavirus disease, COVID-19, to be a pandemic, due to the speed and scale of transmission. WHO and public health authorities around the world are taking action to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. Certain populations, such as those with disability, may be impacted more significantly by COVID-19. This impact can be mitigated if simple actions and protective measures are taken by key stakeholders.

Webinar: Recommendations for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the response to COVID-19

26 Mar 2020 - 26 Mar 2020


CHILDREN: KEY MESSAGES

- Encourage **active listening** and an **understanding attitude** with the children.

- Help children find **positive ways to express disturbing feelings** such as anger, fear and sadness. Every child has his/her own way to express emotions. Sometimes engaging in a creative activity, such as playing and drawing can facilitate this process.

- Encourage **an increased sensitive and caring environment** around the child.

- Remember that **children often take their emotional cues from the important adults in their lives**. It’s important that adults manage their own emotions well and remain calm, listen to children's concerns and speak kindly to them and reassure them.

- Keep **regular routines** and schedules as much as possible or help create new ones in a new environment, including **learning, playing** and **relaxing**. If possible, maintain schoolwork, study or other routine activities.

- Provide **facts about what is going on and give clear child-friendly information** about how to reduce risk of infection and stay safe in words they can understand. Demonstrate to children how they can keep themselves safe (e.g., show them effective handwashing).
CHILDREN: RESOURCES

TIPS FOR HEALTHY PARENTING

• One-on-one Time
• Keeping it Positive
• Structure Up
• Keep Calm and Manage Stress
• Talking about COVID-19

Children: Resources

https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-reference-group-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-emergency-settings/my-hero-you
Try as much as possible to **keep to your personal daily routines or create new ones**. Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly, maintain regular sleep routines and eat healthy food. Keep things in perspective and use IT to connect with loved ones.

If health authorities have recommended limiting your physical contact to contain the outbreak, you can still **stay socially connected** via e-mail, social media, video conferencing and telephone.