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PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Managing Stress and Anxiety Caused by COVID-19

This information explains how you can manage stress and anxiety caused by COVID-19.

It's normal to feel stressed, sad, or worried about COVID-19, especially if you or your loved one is sick. Remember, there is no right or wrong way to cope and everyone deals with stress differently. Here are some things you can do to take care of yourself and manage your stress during this time.

- **Stay connected to your family and friends.** While you may not be able to be with your loved ones in person, you can call, text, and video chat with them. You may find it helpful to plan daily calls with your loved ones that you can look forward to. You can also try video chatting with your family during meals or to play games together.
- **Disconnect from the news.** While it's important to stay updated with the news during this time, it can be overwhelming to listen to. Take breaks from watching, reading, and listening to the news, including social media.

- **Keep a routine.** While your daily routine may have changed, try to create a new one you can follow during this time. Remember to schedule time to relax and disconnect from the news. If there are parts of your routine you miss, try to find ways to add them to your day differently, such as virtual hang outs with friends and family
- **Take care of your body.** Taking care of your body will not only make you feel better but it can also keep you from getting sick. Try to eat healthy meals, drink at least 6 to 8 (8-ounce) glasses of water a day, do some light physical activity (such as walking and stretching), and get at least 7 hours of sleep. It can also help to set reminders for yourself to do these healthy activities.
  - Exercise with Memorial Sloan Kettering’s (MSK) clinical fitness specialists in Integrative Medicine’s video series by visiting [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLME9VJQhE-huAv4Haot7pMkG2-tnOulFi](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLME9VJQhE-huAv4Haot7pMkG2-tnOulFi). Videos include aerobics, strength training, core work, and gentle stretches.
  - Try tai chi with videos featuring MSK’s martial arts instructor by visiting [www.mskcc.org/taichi](http://www.mskcc.org/taichi). Tai chi is a gentle form of exercise that can be done at home to increase balance, steady breathing, and reduce anxiety.
- **Start a new hobby.** If you’re spending a lot of time at home, you can try a new hobby or do things you like to do that you didn’t always have time for. You can read a book, do a puzzle,

try out a new recipe, or watch a new TV show.

- **Try relaxation techniques.** Relaxation techniques, such as taking deep breaths, stretching, and meditating can help you manage stress.
  - Listen to free guided meditations to help you manage your stress, sleep better, and relax by visiting [www.mskcc.org/meditation](http://www.mskcc.org/meditation).
  - You can also try acupuncture (putting pressure on parts of your body to help you relax). To learn how to do acupuncture on yourself, read our resource *Acupuncture for Stress and Anxiety* ([www.mskcc.org/pe/acupuncture\\_anxiety](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/acupuncture_anxiety)).
- **Get emotional support.** MSK has many professionals, volunteers, and support programs that can help you cope during this time. You can contact any of the resources in the “Resources at MSK” section for help.
  - You can also find out if your workplace has an employee assistance program (EAP). EAPs can be different depending on where you work, but they often include counseling for stress, anxiety, and depression.

If you ever find yourself thinking about suicide, get help as soon as you can. You can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (800-273-8255) or visit their website [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org) to connect with a counselor.

The Lifeline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## **Resources at MSK**

No matter where you are in the world, there is support available to you and your family. MSK offers a range of resources to help you manage stress or anxiety caused by COVID-19.

### **Social Work**

212-639-7020

[www.mskcc.org/experience/patient-support/counseling/social-work-support](http://www.mskcc.org/experience/patient-support/counseling/social-work-support)

Our social workers provide emotional support and guidance to patients and their families, friends, and caregivers. Social work offers programs, including both in-person and online support groups. They can also help with practical issues such as transportation to and from medical appointments, temporary housing, and financial concerns. Social workers are available at every MSK location. To talk with a social worker, call 212-639-7020.

If you're interested in joining an online support group, visit the Virtual Programs website at [www.mskcc.org/vp](http://www.mskcc.org/vp) for more information and to sign up.

### **Counseling Center**

646-888-0200

[www.mskcc.org/experience/patient-support/counseling](http://www.mskcc.org/experience/patient-support/counseling)

Many people find that counseling helps them manage their emotions during cancer treatment. MSK's counselors provide counseling for individuals, couples, families, caregivers, and groups. They can also prescribe medications to help with anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems. For more information, call 646-888-0200.

## **Caregivers Clinic**

646-888-0200

[www.mskcc.org/experience/caregivers-support/caregiver-services](http://www.mskcc.org/experience/caregivers-support/caregiver-services)

At MSK, the Caregivers Clinic provides support specifically for caregivers who are having difficulty coping with the demands of being a caregiver. For more information, call Dr. Allison Applebaum's office at 646-888-0200.

## **Spiritual Care**

212-639-5982

[www.mskcc.org/spiritual-religious-care](http://www.mskcc.org/spiritual-religious-care)

At MSK, chaplains are available to listen, help support family members, pray, contact nearby clergy or faith groups, or simply to be a comforting companion and spiritual presence. Anyone can meet with a chaplain, no matter their formal religious affiliation. MSK also has an interfaith chapel that's open to everyone. For more information, call 212-639-5982.

## **Integrative Medicine Service**

646-888-0800

[www.mskcc.org/integrativemedicine](http://www.mskcc.org/integrativemedicine)

Integrative Medicine at Home is a membership-based program delivering live classes through Zoom to support your mind, body and spirit. Other online services include healthcare provider telemedicine consultations, mind-body courses, workshops, and private fitness or mind-body sessions to complement (go along with) traditional medical care. In-person acupuncture and massage therapy is available at the Bendheim Integrative Medicine center. Acupuncture is also available at all MSK regional locations. For more information, call 646-888-0800.

## **Patient and Caregiver Education**

[www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe)

Visit the Patient and Caregiver Education website to search our virtual library. There, you can find written educational resources, videos, and online programs.

## **Patient and Caregiver Support Program**

212-639-5007

[www.mskcc.org/experience/patient-support/counseling/support-groups-programs/patient-patient-support](http://www.mskcc.org/experience/patient-support/counseling/support-groups-programs/patient-patient-support)

You may find it comforting to speak with someone who has been through a similar treatment. Through the Patient and Caregiver Support Program, you can speak with former patients and caregivers. They can speak with you in person, over the phone, or

through email. For more information, call 212-639-5007 or email [patient2patient@mskcc.org](mailto:patient2patient@mskcc.org).

## **Resources for Life After Cancer (RLAC)**

646-888-8106

[www.mskcc.org/experience/living-beyond-cancer/services-survivors](http://www.mskcc.org/experience/living-beyond-cancer/services-survivors)

At MSK, care doesn't end when your treatment is finished. The RLAC Program is for patients and their families who have finished treatment. This program has many services, including seminars, workshops, support groups, counseling on life after treatment, and help with insurance and employment issues. For more information, call 646-888-8106.

## **Virtual Programs**

[www.mskcc.org/vp](http://www.mskcc.org/vp)

MSK's Virtual Programs offer online education and support for patients and caregivers, even when you can't come to MSK in person. Through live, interactive sessions, you can learn about your diagnosis, what to expect during treatment, and how to prepare for the various stages of your cancer care. Sessions are confidential, free, and led by expert clinical staff. If you're interested in joining a Virtual Program, visit our website at [www.mskcc.org/vp](http://www.mskcc.org/vp) for more information.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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