



Safety Note

Updated: 31 March 2020

COVID-19: looking after your health and well-being

Background

There are times when world events bring uncertainty to daily life; this in turn can lead to feelings of worry and anxiousness. The current situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic is a concerning time and many people may be experiencing more distress or anxiety than usual.

During these times of uncertainty it is important to prioritise your emotional and physical health. This safety note is designed to assist with identifying and managing negative impacts to your well-being as a result of COVID-19.

Signs and symptoms of COVID-19 related anxiety and stress

It is normal to be experiencing concerns and worry during the current circumstances. However, if this or any of the symptoms noted below are negatively impacting your ability to undertake everyday activities, be sure to seek support from an appropriate health professional, such as a Psychologist or GP.

You or someone you know may experience periods of:

- Difficulty concentrating or sleeping
- Feelings of anxiety, worry or fear
- Increased irritability or frustration
- A sense of feeling overwhelmed or powerless
- Feelings of sadness or low mood
- Withdrawing from social supports
- Physical symptoms, such as increased heart rate, fatigue or stomach upset

Steps you can take to support your health and well-being

The following are recommendations to assist with managing anxiety or uncertainty related to this global health issue.

1. **Maintain your day-to-day normal activities and routine.** Where possible, maintaining your daily routine is important and can have a positive impact on your feelings and mood. It can also help to provide a sense of control and comfort during uncertain times. This includes eating healthy meals, undertaking physical activity, getting enough sleep and finding ways to do the things you enjoy.
2. **Stay connected.** While social distancing may be necessary, this does not mean that we cut-off our contact with family, friends and loved ones. It is important to find ways to access and maintain



communication and contact with others and be sure to check on anyone with limited social support that may be vulnerable to being lonely or isolated.

3. **Set limits around news and social media.** It is important to stay informed as the situation develops, however too much focus or attention can increase our feelings of powerlessness and anxiety. Seek up-to-date and accurate information from reliable sources, such as the Australian Government's [health alert](#) when required. Also be sure to take regular breaks from the news cycles and social media.
4. **Take care of your emotional health.** It is important not to neglect your emotional health at this time. For people with pre-existing conditions, maintaining continuity of care is especially important. For others experiencing heightened feelings of distress or anxiety, undertaking activities such as mindfulness or guided relaxation may assist with reducing uncomfortable emotions. A free, online resource that may be useful for regular mindfulness practice is Smiling Mind (see the [website](#) for links to the online app).
5. **Be mindful of your relationships.** During times of stress additional strain can be placed on our relationships with others. The secondary impacts of the current situation could include financial stress, conflict within the family, time pressures and uncertainty about the future. Try to show compassion in your interactions with those around you, especially with loved ones. If your personal relationships begin to suffer, be sure to seek out further support such as through the [Employee Assistance Program](#) (staff) or [student services](#) (students).
6. **Practice self-compassion.** As you would with others in distress, the act of treating yourself with kindness and self-compassion is important during these times, rather than judging ourselves or others' negatively.
7. **Protect your health.** Following the guidelines for healthy hygiene and health recommendations in relation to gatherings and physical distancing is an important step in limiting your exposure to the virus.
8. **Seek further support if required.** If you have any concerns with your emotional or physical well-being be sure to seek out appropriate professional assistance, such as through your GP or other relevant health practitioner.

Resources and links

- [COVID-19 \(coronavirus\) advice for the UQ community](#)
- [The Employee Assistance Program \(staff\)](#)
- [Student counselling support](#)
- [Australian Government health alert COVID-19 resources](#)
- [UQ healthy hygiene tips- You Tube](#)
- [BUPA Life Skills- online modules for sleep hygiene and coping skills](#)
- [Health, Safety and Wellness UQ events calendar](#)