

Health workers: Protect yourself, your family and colleagues from stress during COVID-19



As a healthcare worker on the frontline of COVID-19 you are going to experience stress during this time. Here are some ways to care for yourself, your family and colleagues:

Protect yourself

Minimize exposure to multiple news sources that may cause anxiety

Seek information only from trusted sources like the:

- www.nicd.ac.za
- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV
- www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019
- www.sacoronavirus.co.za

Look after your chronic condition if you have one:

Adhere to your treatment.

Have healthy work habits

- Manage your time sensibly.
- Take scheduled breaks.
- Remind yourself of your purpose as a clinician.
- Be sure you are clear about your role and responsibilities.

Look after your health:

- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise, eat sensibly, minimise alcohol and avoid smoking.
- Take time to do a relaxing breathing exercise each day.
- Find a fun or creative activity to do.

Protect your family by using your senses

Sight

If possible go outside together and appreciate something about nature; watch an uplifting movie.



Sound

Relax and listen to music together; tell stories.



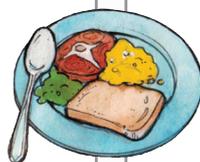
Touch

Give each other a hug. Remember to first shower/bath/wash and put on clean clothes if arriving home from work.



Smell

Be aware of the smells of home cooked food and clean washed hands.



Taste

Make meals and enjoy them together.

Movement

Engage in physical activity like dancing and laughing together.



Protect your colleagues

Decide on an approved way of behaving at work:

- Treat colleagues and patients with respect.
- Support each other. Consider setting up a staff support group.
- Instead of complaining, rather focus on finding solutions to problems.



Identify traumatic stress or burnout in yourself and your colleagues and get help:

- Nightmares, flashbacks, avoidance of people/situations, jumpiness or a feeling of detachment.
- Muscle tension, restlessness, irritability, difficulty sleeping, poor concentration, tiredness.

Look at how to make the job less stressful:

- Examine the team's workload to see if it can be streamlined.
- Identify what needs to be changed to make the job easier: equipment, drug supply, training, space.
- Discuss each team member's role. Ensure each one has a say in how s/he does his/her work.

Where to get help:

- The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for Western Cape government healthcare workers: **0800 611093** or send a 'please call me' ***134*905#**: Counselling services are offered free of charge.
- Mental health helpline - Counselling and support for patient with mental illness or substance misuse **0800 12 13 14** (24 hour helpline).
- Chat online with a counsellor 7 days a week from 9am - 4pm via the Cipla Whatsapp Chat Line **076 882 2775**.
- SMS **31393** or **32312** and a counsellor will call you back - available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

