

Tips for Managing “Flu Stress”

News of a flu pandemic causes stress for a lot of people - that’s to be expected.

Sometimes stress can be a motivator to do the extra work that’s needed to stay safe in difficult times.

But too much stress gets in the way of staying calm and taking the steps needed to stay healthy.

This tip sheet offers ideas to help focus your emotional and physical energy in healthy ways.



The **goal** is to control stress and worries about the flu so you can go on with your life while getting ready for or living through a flu pandemic.

LEARN about the flu

- ⇒ Learn as much as you can from trustworthy sources - this puts you in control and reduces stress.
- ⇒ *Don't* listen to too much “flu news” - a constant flood of information can increase your worries.
- ⇒ Listen for what you need to know - you’re better able to care for yourself and family knowing:
 - ✓ Symptoms of the flu
 - ✓ How flu is spread
 - ✓ The best ways to protect against getting the flu
 - ✓ What to do if someone at home has “flu-like” symptoms
 - ✓ When and how to seek medical care for the flu
 - ✓ What is needed and how to care for someone at home with the flu
 - ✓ Where to learn if local schools, work or other places are closing

For trustworthy information about the flu, visit the Connecticut Department of Public Health’s web site at <http://www.ct.gov/CTFluWatch/site/default.asp> or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>.

PLAN AHEAD: expect the best and prepare for the worst

- ⇒ Plan ahead to help protect against the flu - your positive actions will also reduce stress.
- ⇒ Become prepared - so that you’re able to keep a comfortable and fairly regular, daily routine.
- ⇒ Keep daily routines - they provide reassurance, relief and stress reduction during times of crisis.
 - ✓ Teach family members good health practices - cover sneezes and coughs, and wash hands often.
 - ✓ Eat a healthy diet, exercise and get enough rest to feel refreshed each day.
 - ✓ Teach kids to keep their hands away from their mouth, nose and eyes as much as possible.
 - ✓ Make a list of doctors, pharmacy, family and emergency contact numbers for each family member.
 - ✓ Check to be sure doctor-prescribed medicines are updated and filled for all family members.
 - ✓ Stock your home with a 2-week supply of water, food, batteries and medical supplies (for pets, too!)
 - ✓ Support family members by listening and talking: learn what your kids have heard about the flu pandemic, address their concerns and talk with them about how you (and doctors) are prepared to care for them.
 - ✓ Build resilience in family members - identify and discuss thoughts and feelings, ways to respond appropriately, and help them find healthy ways to “de-stress”.
 - ✓ For more planning ahead ideas, use the “Flu Preparedness Checklist” (in many languages) at <http://pandemicflu.gov/plan/individual/checklist.html>

Learn more about dealing with difficult times in life by reading these resources: [The Road to Resilience](#), [10 Tips for Building Resilience in Children and Teens](#), [Tips for Relaxation](#) and [Preparing for a Flu Pandemic Fact Sheet: Coping and Emotional Well-Being](#)

PROTECT yourself and family with ACTION on a daily basis

- ⇒ Stay updated during and beyond the pandemic phase - because things change from day-to-day.
- ⇒ Maintain and develop your support systems - sharing concerns with others will reduce your stress.
- ⇒ Accept that you are doing all you can - and know that you are unable to control all things.
 - ✓ Continue to follow good health practices - be sure to get a flu shot when it is time!
 - ✓ Make use of community services as appropriate - call **2-1-1** for information on what is available.
 - ✓ Realize that fear is a natural human emotion - and keep taking steps to reduce stress and anxiety.
 - ✓ Lower the demands on yourself and others when the pandemic is at its worst and many people are sick
 - ✓ Know that feelings of fear, grief, loneliness, stress and panic are normal reactions during stressful times.
 - ✓ Practice positive self-talk and positive thinking - combat any negative thinking habits!

For more information on helping your family stay healthy and calm during a Pandemic Flu, see the following: [A Parents' Guide to Helping Families Cope with a Pandemic Flu](#)

EXPECT changes and misinformation and respond wisely

- ⇒ Daily schedules may be disrupted due to school or business closings - being flexible is key here!
- ⇒ Misinformation will be spread around - you can take responsibility for getting the correct information.
- ⇒ Poorly informed people may show fear and disrespect for sick people and their family members.
 - ✓ Learn to roll with daily changes when necessary, and enjoy familiar routines when possible.
 - ✓ Be kind and forgiving to yourself and loved ones - modify your schedules and goals to match reality.
 - ✓ Don't be quick to assume the worst when hearing scary pandemic information - you can check it out!
 - ✓ If you see negative behaviors directed at people with the flu, try to support those hurt by the behaviors.
 - ✓ If you're kept apart by school or business closures, use phones, computers and mail to stay in touch!
 - ✓ If school is closed, consider books and distance learning options for kids.
 - ✓ Continue to identify and engage in more "comfort" activities during stressful times.
 - ✓ Start a new routine for "at home" days. (What have you imagined doing if you had more time at home?!)

For additional information, consider these: [Connecting with Others: Seeking Social Support](#), [Connecting with Others: Giving Social Support](#), and [Home Care for Pandemic Flu](#)

Know when you need help – and get the help you deserve!

Please seek mental health assistance if you feel depressed, hopeless, very fearful or angry... or if you are experiencing physical problems with no medical explanation. There is help available for you.

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



Connecticut Department of Mental Health
and Addiction Services



Connecticut Department of
Children and Families

