



National Indian Health Board NATIONAL TRIBAL COVID-19 RESPONSE

910 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE | Washington, D.C. 20003 | 202-507-4070 | www.nihb.org

4/17/2020

COVID-19 Psychological Impact among Indian Country

The recent outbreak of the COVID-19 has placed mental and behavioral stress on Indian Country. Tribal members may experience fear, anxiety, guilt, loss, and other feelings associated with uncertainty. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Preventing (CDC), anxiety and fear about disease and illness can be an emotional response in both children and adults.¹ Everyone reacts differently during an emergency or stressful situation so it is important to pay attention to how you feel.

When and Where to Seek Help:

Symptoms may develop from coping with COVID-19 and it varies from person to person; however experts indicated if symptoms last for 2-4 weeks and you are not able to carry out normal responsibilities, professional help is recommended to provide additional support to ensure safety and healthy adjustment.

Symptoms to look out for:

- Fear and worry
- Anxiety
- Feelings of grief, loss or loneliness
- Changes in sleep and eating routines
- Worsening of chronic health conditions
- Increase use of substances including alcohol, drugs, and tobacco.



Seek help by calling your mental health provider, calling helplines such as Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Hotline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746, or utilizing telebehavioral health services, if available.

Risk to those with Pre-existing Mental and Behavioral Health Conditions

The reaction to this pandemic may add to other pre-existing issues such as significant life stress, substance abuse including alcohol and drugs, depression, suicidality, grief, negative self-image, domestic violence, and so forth. In addition, worrying about their own health and those who they are close to contributes to uneasiness. Further, they are concerned about securing groceries and personal items needed during this pandemic, their financial status, and job status. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recommends that people with a pre-existing mental or behavioral health condition continue their treatment plan during an emergency and monitor for any new symptoms.² Learning ways to cope can help reduce stress in yourself and others.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Stress and Coping. [Available: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>]

² Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. [Available: <https://www.samhsa.gov/disaster-preparedness>]



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Recommended Prevention & Coping Strategies

- Keep a normal routine as much as possible
- Continue to wake up and sleep during normal hours
- Eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly
- Use trusted sources and minimize exposure to social media, watching news, and reading about the COVID-19
- Engage in healthy activities to “unwind,”
- Have “alone” time to process feelings and thoughts daily using relaxation activities
- Connect with others. Talk to people you trust about feelings and concerns



Additionally, seeking out traditional spirituality services from your medicine people may help to cope with these uncertainties.

Electronic Resources

Companies are now offering free resources and mobile application to help cope, such as the Total Brain App, a self-care app that monitors and measures emotional and cognitive capacities to address your risk in the moment and determine if additional help is needed. There are also apps such as Calm, a relaxation and mediation app. **These apps are not intended to be a substitute for professional **medical advice**, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the **advice** of your healthcare provide or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a **mental or behavioral health** condition.**

Additional information can be found at the:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration

- <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Tips-for-Survivors-of-a-Disaster-or-Other-Traumatic-Event-Managing-Stress/SMA13-4776>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/disaster-behavioral-health-resources>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
- <https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp>

Disclaimer:

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