



Southeastern Idaho Public Health

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Contact: Tracy McCulloch
(208)239-5250

Managing the Stress of COVID-19

SOUTHEAST IDAHO- The outbreak of COVID-19 may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress in healthy ways will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.

Different types of stress include fear about your own health and the health of loved ones; changes in sleep or eating patterns; difficulty sleeping or concentrating, the worsening of chronic health problems; and increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. In dealing with stress, Southeastern Idaho Public Health recommends the following:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals; exercise regularly; get plenty of sleep; and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

“Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations,” said Maggie Mann, Southeastern Idaho Public Health District Director. “How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in.”

Some individuals, including children, older individuals, people with chronic disease, people helping with the response to the outbreak such as health care providers, and first responders and people who already have mental health or substance abuse problems may respond strongly to the stress of the situation.

You can reduce the stress on yourself and others by sharing the facts about COVID-19 and understanding the actual risk to yourself and people you care about. This can make an outbreak seem less stressful.

“You can turn to reputable state resources such as our website at siphidaho.org or the Governor’s website at coronavirus.idaho.gov. Facts can help to minimize fears,” said Mann.

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Bannock County • 1901 Alvin Ricken Dr. • Pocatello, Idaho 83201 • Phone 208.233.9080 • Fax 208.234.7169
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Parents should also be conscience of how stress can manifest in their children and find ways to reduce that potential stress. Some ways children and adolescents respond to stress including excessive crying or irritation, particularly for younger children, returning to behaviors they outgrown, excessive worry, and unhealthy eating or sleeping habits. For teenagers, the stress can lead to difficulty with attention and concentration, unexplained headaches or body pain, and substance use.

To avoid these issues establish open communication with your child, reassure them they are safe, and limit exposure to news coverage, including social media. It is also important keep up with regular routines.

“Focusing on preparedness, staying calm, reaching out to check on the well-being of others, and self-care will help you through this challenging moment in history. Remind yourself that COVID-19 is a serious but temporary illness, and that life will return to normal in time,” said Mann.

For more information:

- Visit SIPH’s website at siphidaho.org.
- Call SIPH’s COVID-19 hotline at 208.234.5875.
- Watch SIPH’s District Director on Facebook Live, facebook.com/siphidaho, Monday-Friday at 11 am.

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