

H1N1 Fact Sheet

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Tips for Managing Stress during a Pandemic – Health Care Workers

Dealing with family members, patients and co-workers during a flu pandemic can be very stressful. You may be worried about your health and the health of those you care about while also wanting to provide optimal care to your patients. Worry, fear, anxiety and concern about the future are common and normal reactions to this kind of situation.

You may notice some of the following as you proceed through this potentially stressful time:

- Fear that you, or those close to you, will become ill
- Changes in sleep patterns and appetite
- Feeling frustrated, tired, restless and distressed
- Unable to connect with family as often as you want due to increased demands at work
- Less interest in daily activities
- Increased irritability and impatience
- Upset due to significant disruptions in the workplace

There is no single way to relieve all of your stress, but if you practice some of the suggestions noted below this could enhance your ability to deal with the increase in stress and bounce back once this situation has settled:

- Get plenty of sleep and be physically active
- Drink plenty of water to keep yourself well-hydrated
- Take a break during the workday (e.g. lunch) by taking a short walk
- Take time to chat with colleagues, engage in humour and talk about non work-related topics
- Establish a peer group to give and receive support
- Balance your family, work, relationships, play and rest
- Where possible, take a three minute break to monitor your breathing and allow your mind to regroup
- When you arrive home at the end of the day and before going into your house, take a moment to orient yourself to being back home and being with your family
- Congratulate yourself for the work you have done during the day/shift
- Keep up to date on the latest H1N1 information available

Seek professional support when needed. For help with mental health problems, call the mental health program at your local district health authority and/or your health centre if you live in a First Nation community.