



THE ONTARIO

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Caregiver Mental Health During COVID-19 Outbreak

Countries around the world are actively working to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. One strategy is social distancing or avoiding interaction with others. While this strategy is necessary, it can contribute to feelings of isolation and affect a person's mental health. This is true for family caregivers and the person they support.

If you are concerned that you may have been exposed to, or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, please contact Telehealth at 1.866.797.0000, your doctor or your [local public health unit](#). You can also use the [self-assessment tool](#).

The Ontario government is asking that you not visit an assessment centre unless you are showing symptoms and to avoid calling 911 unless it's an emergency. [Learn more](#).



Seek information from trusted sources



Keep a regular routine as much as possible



Prepare your contingency plan



Stay connected and maintain social networks



Find opportunities to share positive stories and acknowledge those in your circle of care



Attend to your own needs and feelings

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1. Seek information from trusted sources

There is a lot of information being shared. If watching, reading or listening to the news is causing anxiety and distress, reduce your exposure and seek updates from trusted sources once or twice a day. The Ontario government is providing COVID-19 updates on their [website](https://www.ontario.ca/covid) everyday, seven days a week, at 10:30 a.m. and 5.30 p.m. EDT. Another trusted source of information is Public Health Ontario www.publichealthontario.ca

2. Prepare your contingency plan

Prepare your contingency plan should you become ill or need to self-quarantine. Having a plan may help relieve some of the stress. Expand your circle of support and ask trusted members of your family or friends if they can step in to help if needed. Document the types of care you provide i.e. medication, feeding etc. so someone can easily reference and provide the care needed. Keep a list of all doctors and other healthcare providers in one place. Ensure any medical records, [healthcare journey binders](#) or other documentation is easily accessible so members of your circle of care/support know where to find them.

3. Find opportunities to share positive stories and acknowledge those in your circle of care

If you are providing care to someone with a physical and/or mental health challenge, share positive stories of people who have recovered from COVID-19 or are managing well during periods of social distancing. Acknowledge health care providers and thank them for their commitment at this difficult time. These hopeful messages can be meaningful to those who are working on the front-line to keep all of us safe.

4. Keep a regular routine as much as possible

As much as possible, keep a regular routine or help create new ones in a new environment, including regular exercising, cleaning and virtual contact with family, friends and community members. Develop strategies for adapting your routine during periods of social distancing or self-isolation. There are many resources available online for shopping, communication, exercise etc. to help adapt your routine. Help others, through peer support and neighbour check in. Keep regular contact with the person you care for, even if you can't visit in person.

5. Stay connected and maintain social networks

Use technology to help you stay connected i.e. email, social media, video conference (Facetime, skype etc.) and telephone. If you are caring for someone in a long-term or other healthcare facility, check to see what technology they have available. With changes to visitation guidelines, many homes are adding additional ways for residents and families to connect. If you have a creative idea, let us know and share with your local facility.

6. Attend to your own needs and feelings

Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly, keep a regular sleep routine and eat healthy food. If you or someone you care for needs mental health support, contact your local healthcare provider. Other resources include [Connex Ontario](#), [Bounceback](#), and [Big White Wall](#).

**Content Drawn from the World Health Organization:*

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