



# Coronavirus Resources

## Pneumonia Outbreak in China

On 31 December 2019, Chinese officials reported an outbreak of cases of pneumonia of unknown causes in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. Chinese authorities have since identified the cause of the infection as a new coronavirus.

### About Coronaviruses

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.

Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people. Detailed investigations found that SARS-CoV was transmitted from civet cats to humans and MERS-CoV from dromedary camels to humans. Several known coronaviruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans.

Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

The clinical signs and symptoms reported in this current outbreak are mainly fever, with a few cases having difficulty in breathing. Chest X-rays show invasive pneumonic infiltrates in both lungs of the victims.

### WHO advice

Based on information provided by national authorities, WHO's recommendations on public health measures and surveillance for novel coronaviruses apply.

### Precautions against contracting viruses

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a handkerchief or tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your mouth and nose.
- Avoid close contact with people who might be ill.
- Stay away from crowded areas.
- Practice good health habits like eating nutritious food, getting adequate sleep and keeping physically active.

### Travellers: Practice Usual Precautions

While the cause of the pneumonia seems to be a novel coronavirus, transmission potential and modes of transmission remain unclear. Therefore, it would be prudent to reduce the general risk of acute respiratory infections while travelling in or from affected areas by:

- Avoiding close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections;
- Frequent hand-washing, especially after direct contact with ill people or their environment;
- Avoiding close contact with live or dead farm or wild animals;
- Travellers with symptoms of acute respiratory infection should practice cough etiquette (maintain distance, cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or clothing, and wash hands).

Source: *The World Health Organization* - [www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus](http://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus)

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## Coping with a Crisis

During a personal crisis, some people are more capable of bouncing back than others. That's due to their resilience. Resilience is about more than coping; it's about confronting crises without being overwhelmed. Resilient people are better able to handle life's stressors and adapt to changing situations. You can develop resilience by improving self-esteem, cultivating a strong system of social support and taking care of their physical and mental health.

Here are some other tips for resilience in the face of crisis:

### **Maintain Strong Connections With Family and Friends**

Having strong, positive relationships provides support that can help you weather tough times.

### **Avoid Viewing Problems as Insurmountable**

Learn from past experiences and be confident that you will get through current ones, too.

### **Accept That Change is Part of Living**

Accepting change makes it easier to move forward with your life.

### **Keep a Long-term Perspective and Hopeful Outlook**

Set goals for yourself so that you have a direction for your future.

### **Take Care of Your Physical and Mental Health**

It's especially important when you are feeling stressed to continue to eat a healthy diet and get adequate sleep and regular exercise.

### **Get Support and Resources From Your Employee Assistance Programme**

If you need help dealing with a personal crisis, contact your GuidanceResources employee assistance programme for confidential counselling and other services.

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## Self-care for Stress Relief

To feel your best, it is important to take care of yourself. That means eating well, exercising, keeping work and home life balanced and maintaining good relationships. There are times, however, when even these things can't prevent stress and anxiety from creeping in. That's why self-care is so important.

Taking a small amount of time out of your busy schedule just for yourself is key to handling all your duties while getting the most out of life. Try these tips to give yourself the attention you need to be your best.

### Deep Breathing

- Deep breathing focuses on using the diaphragm (the spot just under your rib cage) to draw slow, deep breaths into the lungs and to release them slowly. Take a couple of minutes every hour to practice some deep breathing.

### Stretching

- Stress often appears as tension in our necks, shoulders and head. Stretching exercises can relieve tension, make your body more flexible and produce a calming effect. Even just shrugging your shoulders, stretching your arms and rolling your neck a few times a day can have positive effects.

### Meditation and Visualisation

- Meditation involves "quieting the mind" by blocking out sensory input and distraction, while visualisation involves using the brain's creative capacity to create a stress-free experience, much like daydreaming. Try to carve out 15 minutes daily to quiet your mind and body.

### Muscle Relaxation

- Progressive muscle-relaxation techniques involve systematically tensing, relaxing and visualising each major muscle group. It is best to practice these techniques when you have about 20 minutes and are able to find a quiet place where you can lie down without being disturbed.

### Calming Thoughts

- Our thought patterns often cause or contribute to the stress that we are feeling. The next time you encounter a stressful situation, take a moment to tune into your thoughts and feelings. Write these thoughts down and then write down a more positive replacement.

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## Talking to a Child about a Traumatic Event

Even in the seemingly simple world of a child, life can be filled with complexities and uncertainties. Violence, crime, accidents and death are an unfortunate reality in today's world. Parents need to help their children sort through troubling emotions following a traumatic event and encourage them to grieve.

### The Importance of Talking to a Child

Few things in life can prepare us for a tragedy or great misfortune. Children often are hit the hardest during those times, especially if they have never experienced trauma or loss. A range of confusing emotions can surface in a child, and he or she may find it hard to express these feelings or reach out to others for comfort and consolation. Parents and caregivers can create a safe environment for children to talk about these emotions.

Children need to feel comfortable confiding in people who are willing to listen to their concerns. They need to feel understood. They need to let the pain out instead of keeping it inside. They need to be reassured that, though it may take time to grieve and heal, things are going to be all right. While it is important to have this kind of support from relatives, friends and others who may have been affected by the same traumatic event, the most vital resource a child has in a time of crisis is his or her parents. Though they may not admit it, children who are suffering need their parents to be willing and available to listen and talk.

### Understanding a Child's Emotions

Experts say that although children may not show much sorrow and pain outwardly, all children mourn when traumatic events occur. Children need to be allowed to express their emotions in their own way, as long as they do not compromise their safety. Many younger children act out their feelings through play and certain behaviors, such as anger, clinginess, irritability or regression (e.g., thumb sucking long after quitting the habit). Older children may vent their emotions by verbally lashing out in anger at the ones they love, listening to aggressive music and isolating themselves in their rooms. These age-appropriate behaviors are considered normal coping mechanisms if they do not last for an extended period of time.

Children also need to be reassured that the traumatic event is not their fault and that they are strong enough to carry on. Many children assume guilt and blame when misfortunes happen. Others build up incredible anger that such catastrophes could happen to them and may direct their anger at loved ones. Though it will be tough, parents need to be honest, consistent, accepting and loving in their approach to handling these issues with their children. Above all, parents should acknowledge that the emotions their children are feeling are absolutely real. Talking to your children about what they are feeling and offering your support will assure them of your understanding of the situation.

### The Stages of Grieving

Children, like adults, cope with grief in different ways. Typically, most children go through the following stages of grieving:

1. Shock, denial and isolation. "This can't be happening to me." These feelings can cause physical symptoms such as bedwetting, exhaustion and sleep disturbances.
2. Anger. "Why me?" If someone died, for example, the child may feel abandoned or rejected by the deceased, demonstrate rage and blame others such as his or her parents or God.
3. Guilt. "It's my fault," or "If only I hadn't done..." Because children frequently disagree with their parents, they may carry guilt if a trauma affects one of their parents.
4. Bargaining. "If you just make it better, God, I promise to..."
5. Depression. "It's no use." The child may feel emotions such as deep sadness, helplessness, hopelessness and isolation.
6. Acceptance. "I acknowledge what has happened, and I can get through this." The child learns to carry on. The trauma recedes in importance in daily life.

## Coping Tips

Use the following tips to help your child and yourself cope with a traumatic event:

- Find solace in people who understand. Connect with other families who also may be experiencing a tragedy or a loss. Get involved with a support group. Ask what worked to help their children cope with a trauma.
- If the traumatic event resulted in the loss of life, commemorate the memory of the deceased. Attend a memorial service with your child. Honor the deceased by planting a commemorative garden in your backyard or creating a special dedication drawing or painting with your child. Visit the site of the tragedy together, and leave flowers or another loving token or gesture of respect. Returning to the scene of the event may help bring emotions into the open and bring closure to the event.
- Consider talking to a clergy person about the spiritual significance of the traumatic event. Your child may be able to find a higher meaning in the suffering through religious counsel.
- Give your child enough time to mourn and heal. Do not try to rush him or her back into daily activities or ask your child to forget his or her pain too early.
- When the time is right, make your child feel safe, secure and comfortable by returning to regular family routines. Children thrive on routines and structure as long as they are not used to ignore or bury unresolved problems.

Do not be afraid to seek professional help to ease your child's mourning, especially if the sadness lingers.

## Warning Signs

Some children have more difficulty than others coping with traumatic events. Experts say that most children return to a state of normalcy and acceptance within six months of the event. However, if you observe the following signs in your child over a prolonged period of time, seek professional help:

- Lack of interest in daily activities
- Denial, when the child pretends that the event has not happened
- Poor grades and declining performance in school
- Frequent bouts of anxiety
- Social withdrawal from friends and family
- Inability to sleep
- Change in eating habits
- Irritability and uneasiness
- Regression, when the child acts younger than his or her age
- Bedwetting after being potty trained
- Use of alcohol or drugs in older children

## Resources

- SAMHSA's National Mental Health Information Center: [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
- National Institute of Mental Health: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)
- The American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress: [www.aaets.org](http://www.aaets.org)

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# ARE YOU STRESSED???

To a certain degree, feeling stressed is a normal, healthy response to life's events and challenges. However, prolonged stress can have adverse effects on your health and general well-being.

Conditions linked to stress include:

- Migraines and headaches
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Cardiovascular disorders
- Diabetes
- Asthma

Behavioural symptoms include:

- Social withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Forgetfulness
- Lack of concentration
- Substance abuse

## 8 Tips for Beating Stress



### Laugh and Learn

Instead of getting irritated, laugh at life's annoyances and learn from your mistakes.



### Identify the Causes

Is it traffic? Problems at work? Bad news on the TV? What stresses you out?



### Keep a Schedule

Allow ample time for travel and schedule free time for yourself.



### Focus on the Positive

Be proud of your accomplishments and celebrate your successes.



### Get Enough Sleep and Exercise

Exercise not only improves health and mood, it aids in better sleep.



### Meditate

By sitting in a quiet environment and closing your eyes you can achieve relaxation.



### Do Things You Enjoy

Make and take time to do activities that bring you pleasure.



### Nurture Relationships

More interpersonal contact with the right people can help relieve stress.

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# Keeping Stress Levels in Check

Resiliency and stress are intertwined. The more resilient we are, the better able we are to deal with stress, but the more stressed we are, the less resilient we become. That's why keeping stress levels in check is key to building and maintaining our resilience. Here are a few tips for managing stress:

- **Get enough rest.** Doctors recommend seven to eight hours of sleep a night for adults.
- **Exercise regularly.** Swimming, running, brisk walking, aerobic exercises and other repetitive fitness activities are especially beneficial. Experts recommend exercising at least 20 to 30 minutes three to five times a week.
- **Engage in fulfilling activities.** Take a little time each day for something you like to do: a hobby, a walk with your partner, an hour with a good book or a home-improvement project.
- **Avoid caffeine, nicotine and other stimulants.** These common drugs can induce stress and anxiety. A simple step like switching to decaffeinated coffee can have a real effect on your stress level.
- **Avoid alcohol, tranquillisers and recreational drugs.** These may contribute to anxiety and depression and an increased sense of loss of control.

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## When Anxiety Becomes a Problem

Everyone experiences stress and anxiety to some degree. If you find yourself in a constant state of worry and continually unable to relax, you may be experiencing generalized anxiety disorder. Thankfully, there are several treatment options to help you keep your anxiety from interfering with your enjoyment of life. If you suspect that you have an anxiety disorder, seek professional help, and educate yourself on the condition.

### Understanding Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Each of us has normal, everyday fears and concerns that we can usually manage or resolve. Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), however, is manifested by chronic, exaggerated worries that usually are provoked by no apparent cause or other illness. Though these persistent fears are typically irrational, the individual often expects the worst to happen, such as a deadly crash, a family disaster, a sudden sickness or financial ruin.

Unlike many people with other anxiety disorders, like phobias, people with GAD usually do not avoid frightening objects or situations. They are able to function and maintain relationships. Yet the constant worries and sense of dread they experience often limit their ability to experience life to the fullest. The unresolved anxiety also can trigger a variety of health problems and symptoms, including:

- Nervousness
- Trembling
- Twitching
- Sweating
- Irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle tension
- Lightheadedness
- Indigestion and abdominal pain
- Difficulty falling or remaining asleep

Though researchers do not know exactly what triggers GAD, they believe it probably is caused by a combination of stressful life events and biological and hereditary factors. Other disorders may be present in addition to GAD, such as panic disorder or depression. In general, the onset of GAD is gradual and often begins in childhood. Symptoms have a tendency to decrease with age.

If you have worried excessively about a variety of problems over six months or longer, you may have GAD. Do not be afraid to seek help. A therapist can talk to you about what you are experiencing and put you in touch with support resources and a specialist who can help treat the disorder.

### Treatment

There are several treatment options that your physician and a therapist can coordinate. Your involvement in treatment will require patience and diligence. Anxieties take time to resolve. The more you learn about the condition and recognize your patterns of thought, the better chance you have of effectively managing GAD.

Treatment includes:

- **Cognitive-behavioral therapy.** This therapy works with a combination of behavioral techniques like breathing, relaxation exercises and exercises that help you change the way you think about your anxiety.
- **Habituation exercises.** This approach can help individuals confront their fears and learn to diminish anxiety.
- **Systematic desensitization (also called exposure and response prevention).** These exercises help individuals overcome their GAD behaviors by exposing them to the frightening thoughts or situations.
- **Deep-breathing exercises and relaxation techniques.** These techniques, such as progressive muscle relaxation exercises which teach you to tense, hold, focus on and slowly release different muscle groups, help reduce the symptoms of anxiety.
- **Medication.** Your doctor or a psychiatrist can talk with you about medications that are used to control anxiety successfully.

Another widely used treatment method is traditional talk therapy: working with a therapist to resolve your fears and problems. A therapist may help you uncover the causes of your anxieties and suggest coping techniques. In talk therapy, you learn to recognize how certain thoughts can provoke anxiety symptoms and how to change those thought patterns to decrease future anxiety episodes. Your therapist also may prescribe medication in combination with talk or behavioral therapy.

Your doctor also may suggest eliminating caffeine and alcohol from your diet. These drugs have been known to cause or increase anxiety.

## Anxiety Disorder Self-test

Take this self-test, and talk to your doctor about the results. Answer yes or no to each question. Are you troubled by:

- Repeated, unexpected panic attacks during which you suddenly are overcome by intense fear or discomfort for no apparent reason?
- Persistent, intrusive thoughts, impulses or images that you cannot get out of your mind (such as a preoccupation with getting dirty, worry about the order of things or aggressive or sexual impulses)?
- A powerful and ongoing fear of social situations involving unfamiliar people?
- Excessive worrying, for six months or more, about a number of events or activities?
- Fear of places or situations where getting help or escaping might be difficult, such as in a crowd or on a bridge?
- Shortness of breath or a racing heart for no apparent reason?
- A persistent and unreasonable fear of an object or situation, such as flying, heights, animals, blood, etc.?
- Being unable to travel alone?
- Spending too much time each day doing things over and over again (e.g., handwashing or counting)?
- Having tense muscles or problems sleeping more often than not?
- Experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury to yourself or a loved one (e.g., military combat, a serious car accident)?
- Your anxiety interfering with your daily life?
- Do not let anxiety control you; learn to control it by seeking help and educating yourself on the topic. Get involved in an anxiety support group, and ask friends and family to help you identify any recurrence of irrational behaviors. When you feel anxiety coming on, attempt to rationalize your fears and relax. Try deep-breathing exercises, imagery techniques and meditation to calm down and get through the situation.

## Resources

My Health Beijing: <http://www.myhealthbeijing.com/>

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