

HEALTH ANXIETY

Global epidemics, public health warnings and the outbreak of a disease like the coronavirus (COVID-19) can sometimes appear frightening. With continuous media coverage, unverified stories on social media and uncertain outcomes, it's common to feel overwhelmed and worried about yours, or your family's health and wellbeing. While these feelings are understandable, if they start to interfere with your everyday life, you may be experiencing health anxiety.

How you can help yourself

While it's reasonable to be concerned about the coronavirus, there are simple and effective steps you can take to help take care of yourself, and the people around you.

1 KNOW THE FACTS

Get information or updates from reputable sources. Avoid getting information from social media or second-hand information from people who aren't experts in the field. Instead, look at official government websites, such as:

- **www.health.gov.au**
- **www.health.govt.nz**
- **www.who.int**

2 KNOW WHEN TO SWITCH OFF

Every day we're exposed to new information or updates about the coronavirus. We see and hear it on the morning news, radio, social media or conversations with friends, family or colleagues. While it's important to be informed and kept up to date, over-exposure to this type of content can lead to increased feelings of anxiety or worry. If you notice yourself becoming more anxious, switch off and take a break from the news to focus on the things in your life you have more control of, like your self-care.

3 KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

People who take care of their health and practise good self-care are more resistant to the virus. And, while it's understandable to be concerned about the number of those affected worldwide, it's important to remember that most people who contract the virus, make a full recovery. Keeping things in perspective will help you stay calm.

4 AVOID MAKING ASSUMPTIONS

Remember, anyone can be affected by coronavirus, regardless of their ethnicity, age or gender. Avoid making assumptions against certain communities such as those who originate from countries heavily impacted by the virus. We need to get through this together, by being our best selves and coming together during these challenging times.

5 PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE

Follow official advice and practice good hygiene. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20-seconds, use alcohol-based hand sanitisers and cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. If you develop flu-like symptoms phone Health-line 0800 358 5453. Do not go to the GP or the Hospital until you have been told what to do. Avoid work or public spaces.

6 STAY CALM AND STAY HEALTHY

Some adverse reactions include wanting to pull away and avoid talking about the event or the impact it has had on you. Despite this understandable reaction, it can be helpful to connect with others who can support you and talk through your thoughts and feelings. Or simply be there to spend time with you. Don't isolate yourself.

7 STAY CONNECTED

Connecting with the people around us improves our level of resilience. Although it's not recommended to be in contact with people when you're feeling ill, you can still stay connected by phone, video-call, or text message. If you've noticed that you're feeling worried or anxious, reach out to your friends and family and let them know how you're feeling.

Benestar

Be your best you



What is health anxiety?

Health anxiety is a mental health issue characterised by feelings of worry, anxiety or fear about your health and wellbeing. Some of the symptoms include stress that's out of proportion to the impact of the event, an inability to set aside a worry, and feeling restless.

What are the signs and symptoms of health anxiety

In response to the coronavirus, you may experience, some worry and anxiety, feelings of helplessness, becoming withdrawn or avoiding public places, hypervigilance about health and hygiene, and even confusion, especially when we're getting information from so many different sources.

People with elevated health anxiety might experience severe anxious thoughts that interrupt their daily life.[1]

Common symptoms of anxiety include:

- difficulty concentrating
- restlessness
- rapid heartbeat
- trembling or shaking
- feeling light-headed or faint
- numbness or nausea
- sweating
- avoidance.[2]

It is when you may become so consumed by worry that it affects your ability to work, socialise or complete everyday tasks, that you need to stop and listen.

[1-2] https://www.psychology.org.au/for-the-public/Psychology-Topics/Anxiety

IF YOU NEED SUPPORT

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed by anxiety or concern, contact Benestar for free, confidential support. Our team of health professionals are always here to help. Call us on:
1300 360 364 (Australia)
0800 360 364 (New Zealand)
+61 2 8295 2292 (International)

Benestar
Be your best you

Benestar® is a registered trade mark of Benestar Group Pty Ltd