

Mental Health in Post COVID-19 Recovery

Post-COVID-19

Interdisciplinary Clinical Care Network

Recovery | Care | Research | Education

► Changes in your mental health are common after COVID-19. Being unwell with COVID-19 can be stressful, especially when symptoms last a long time. It is common to have feelings of stress, anxiety (worry, fear) or depression (low mood, sadness). You may also get negative thoughts or have bad memories of being in the hospital. Your mood can also be affected by feelings of frustration about not being able to return to the daily activities that are important to you.



Managing stress, feelings, and overall mental health are an important part of your recovery. There are several resources in this handout that can guide you in your recovery towards mental wellness. It's important to know that many symptoms of COVID-19 are linked - an improvement in one area (e.g. sleep) can lead to an improvement in another area (e.g. fatigue, low mood).

Supporting your mental health

Get enough quality sleep by:

- Having a regular routine of sleeping and waking.
- Making sure your living space is best for a deep sleep (limit distractions like noise and light, aim for a cool yet comfortable temperature).
- Reducing caffeine or nicotine in the hours before bed.
- Unplugging from electronics for an hour before bed to reduce stimulation.



For more information on insomnia and best sleep practices, check out: www.keltyskey.com/courses/insomnia or www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene

- Relaxation techniques can help mental health – consider meditation, mindfulness, grounding, guided imagery/visualization, baths, aromatherapy, Tai Chi, yoga, progressive muscle relaxation and more.

For more information on relaxation techniques, check out: www.mysleepwell.ca/cbti/cbti-components/relax



- Staying socially connected is important for mental well-being. Talking with others can help to reduce stress and provide you with support. This can be a short phone call or video chat with someone you trust, or connecting with others experiencing similar things in a support group.

For more information on COVID-19 support groups check out: www.covidlonghaulcanada.com

- Healthy eating is important for your recovery and well-being. Try to eat regular meals. Calling 8-1-1 is a resource available to anyone in BC who would like to speak with a registered dietitian for guidance.
- Gradually returning to your daily activities or hobbies to the best of your ability will help to improve your mood. Try to start with activities that are most meaningful to you or bring you joy, and do not make you feel too tired.
- Keep to a routine. Even if your day is filled with smaller activities or rest periods, our minds do best with routine. Keep to the same wake time and schedule whenever possible.
- Keep physically active as this is important for your mental wellbeing as well as your physical recovery. Some individuals with long COVID are unable to do much activity without increasing their symptoms. If this is the case, try to start small with gentle walking or stretching.



Recovering from an illness like COVID can be an uphill journey, and low mood can make it feel like you are carrying a heavy backpack on that journey. Talking about what you are experiencing can be very helpful. It can help those close to you understand what you're going through and help you unpack that heavy backpack of items weighing you down. You might also want to share something positive that has happened in the day, or something you are grateful for. Reflecting on even very small or simple things we are grateful for each day can be a very effective way to improve your mental wellbeing.



Web Resources

- Anxiety Canada - COVID-19: www.anxietycanada.com/covid-19
- Here to Help - COVID-19: www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/covid-19-and-anxiety
- Kelty's Key – Self-Help or guided therapy: www.keltyskey.com
- Foundry (for youth aged 12 - 24): www.foundrybc.ca/covid19
- Mental wellbeing audio guides: www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/mental-wellbeing-audio-guides

Videos for meditation & relaxation:

- Calm - www.youtube.com/c/calm
- Headspace - www.youtube.com/c/headspace



Mobile Apps

Free for iOS & Android devices - Be sure to select/enable notifications/reminders if available!

- [Mindshift CBT](#) (Anxiety focus)
- [COVID Coach](#)
- [Woebot](#) (Chatbot)
- [Wysa](#) (Chatbot & optional paid chat therapist)
- [Breathr](#)



Books

- Mind over Mood (Greenberger and Padesky)
- The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook (Bourne)
- Overcoming Trauma and PTSD: a Workbook Integrating Skills from ACT, DBT and CBT (Raja)



Worksheets

- Spiritual Practices for Resilience Worksheets (includes worksheets on self-compassion, gratitude, lament, breath meditation, contemplative reading, and others): www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/amh/if-amh-mhpiip-spiritual-practices-workbook.pdf
- Doing What Matters in Times of Stress: An Illustrated Guide (aims to equip people with practical skills to cope with stress, including audio files for techniques like grounding, building awareness): www.who.int/publications/item/9789240003927



Access to counselling and other supports

- Virtual mental health supports from the Province of BC: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/virtual-mental-health-supports
- Wellness Together Canada: www.wellnesstogether.ca/en-ca/service/connect
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Skills Groups: www.cbtskills.ca

For more information on how to support your understanding and management of symptoms as you recover from COVID-19, please visit www.phsa.ca/health-info/post-covid-19-care-recovery

