



# Mental health and wellbeing

## Information for older people, their families and carers

### COVID-19

The outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) has impacted people on an international scale. It is understandable that during times like this, people may be feeling afraid, worried, anxious or overwhelmed. Given older people are more vulnerable and at risk of more serious symptoms of the coronavirus, they often face more strict isolation measures, which in turn impacts on social connections and routines and ultimately their wellbeing.

This factsheet provides details of how to access supports and offers wellbeing tips and guidance on how to maintain your wellbeing at this time.

### Tips and tricks

Take proactive steps to help you cope during difficult times. These steps may include:

- **Stay connected with friends and family** (consider a phone call or video call). Check in regularly with loved ones, and let people know if you are feeling lonely.
- **Get trusted information on coronavirus.** Misinformation can make us feel anxious, or cause unnecessary stress and worry.
- **Limit how much time you spend watching or reading news.** Watching the news can make us feel stressed and depressed right now. It's important to keep informed, but if it's becoming overwhelming, it might be time to turn the news off for a few hours.
- **Look after your physical health** by getting fresh air and exercise and eating a healthy diet.
- **Put a structure in your day.** Having a regular routine can help you feel more in control of your day, help you get essential tasks done,

and schedule time for keeping in contact with friends or family.

- **Seek professional help** when you need it. This may mean seeking information online, calling a helpline or accessing local support services.

### Stay connected

Even though we may be physically distancing, we can still stay in touch with friends and family using technology:

- If you have a smart phone, you can make video calls. If your computer has a camera you can also use Skype or Zoom to talk to your loved ones.
- Think about making a regular time to phone friends and family. For example, join your grandchildren's story time using Skype.
- Join your local community social media group. This will keep you up to date with what's going on directly around you.
- Asking for and accepting help can be difficult. You may feel that it will stop you being independent. However, having people around who can help you, if you need it, is important for everyone during this time.

### Coping strategies

Some ideas for coping during social distancing, self-isolation or quarantine include:

- Go for a walk outside or spend time in the garden. Read, listen to music, watch television and movies. Crafts, like knitting, and puzzles are great for keeping the brain active.
- Check your local library for online resources, e.g. e-books and audiobooks.



- There are also ways to explore the world without leaving the couch. Many museums, theme parks and zoos are available to explore virtually. Some of the many to choose from are:
  - Art and culture lovers can take a (virtual) walk through the museums, galleries and places all over the world: <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner>
  - Tune into live stream from the zoo: [www.zoo.org.au/animal-house](http://www.zoo.org.au/animal-house) or the aquarium: [www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams](http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams)

## Support from carers, family and friends is important

- **Provide social and practical support.** It's important to check in with the older people in your life in a way – and frequency – that they are comfortable with, whether that's a phone call, a text message, an email, a note on their door or a chat (from an appropriate distance). In terms of practical support, a good start is to ask and discuss with them how they would like you to help. This may be by shopping for food and other essentials or helping them set up a weekly delivery of groceries.
- **Help them stay connected.** Maintaining social connection and staying in touch is critical to our wellbeing. For some older people, understanding the technology that allows them to do so can be a challenge. The [Be Connected](#) website offers helpful resources designed to help older Australians develop digital and online skills, while this page provides a range of [useful tips for older people around staying safe online](#). Think about sending them (trusted) links to things they may enjoy, such as online crosswords and puzzles, music, theatre or sport recordings, or virtual tours of museums and other popular tourist destinations.

- **Share good quality, reliable and up to date information.** In this uncertain and unsettling time, and accessing important, reliable, and current information can provide perspective and help older adults feel more in control of their situation.
- **Assist with healthcare needs.** If the older people you're supporting need help with getting medicines, you could make the trip to the chemist yourself, or help them arrange for the pharmacy to deliver them.

## Local supports

**MPHN Central Access and Navigation Service:** 1800 931 603 (Monday to Friday 9am-5pm).  
NB: This is not a crisis service.  
**Murrumbidgee AccessLine:** 1800 800 944.

## Online and phone supports

Australian Government's Head to Health: [www.headtohealth.gov.au/covid-19-support](http://www.headtohealth.gov.au/covid-19-support)

LifeLine: 13 11 14 (24 hours/7 days); text: 0477 131 114 (6pm-midnight AEDT, 7 nights); chat online: [www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat](http://www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat) (7pm-midnight, 7 nights); or visit: [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

Beyond Blue COVID-19 support line: 1800 512 348; or visit: [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

Older Persons COVID-19 support line: 1800 171 866 (Monday to Friday 8.30am-6pm).

Carer Gateway: 1800 422 737 (Monday to Friday 8am-5pm).

Carers Australia Carer Advisory Service: 1800 242 636.

## Where to get reliable information

For reliable resources and to keep up to date with what is happening with COVID-19:

- call the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080



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*Well People, Resilient Communities  
across the Murrumbidgee*

- visit the NSW Health COVID-19 website:  
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/covid-19-latest.aspx>
- visit the COTA website:  
[www.cota.org.au/covid-19](http://www.cota.org.au/covid-19) or speak to your state or territory COTA representative:  
<http://www.cota.org.au/get-involved/visit-stateor-territory-cota>
- National Seniors Australia:  
<https://nationalseniors.com.au/news/latest/coronavirus-national-seniors-ceo-update> or call 1300 765 050
- OPAN: [www.opan.com.au](http://www.opan.com.au) or call 1800 700 600
- Dementia Australia: [www.dementia.org.au](http://www.dementia.org.au) or call 1800 100 500
- Carers Australia:  
[www.carersaustralia.com.au](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au)

Source acknowledgement:

COTA for older Australians: [www.cota.org.au](http://www.cota.org.au)

BeyondBlue: [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

Dementia Australia: [www.dementia.org.au](http://www.dementia.org.au)

Lifeline: [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)