



Mental health and wellbeing

Information for LGBTQ communities impacted by COVID-19

The outbreak of the coronavirus COVID-19 has impacted people in varying ways on an international scale. It is understandable that during times like this, people may be feeling afraid, worried, anxious and overwhelmed. Evidence suggests LGBTQ people experience higher rates of depression and anxiety compared to the general population, thus COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have disproportionate impact in LGBTQ communities.

Coping with distress and fear in a healthy way will help ensure you, your loved ones and everyone in our communities stay strong and resilient during this time. This factsheet provides details of how to access supports and offer wellbeing strategies on how to remain healthy and deal with the emotional impact of the outbreak.

Wellbeing strategies

Check in with family, friends, neighbours, colleagues and loved ones. Do it by phone, SMS or online. It always helps to talk. Acknowledging your own feelings of distress and discussing this can also help you manage anxiety and stress.

Maintain connections - Start a group chat, hang out through video conferencing, share pictures of your outfits or something positive that happened to you recently. Social distancing does not mean social isolation. Think of it as physical distancing instead.

Stay connected to communities - While the places we hang out are temporarily unavailable, we can still keep in touch with our communities. Follow your favourite event/bar/club on social media, listen to a queer podcast, watch or read LGBTQ media. Fostering a sense of community is important at this time.

Take a break from your newsfeed and focus on something else. Replace the time you spend on social media or watching the news with an activity to nourish and entertain your heart and mind: read a book, indulge in your favourite TV show, bake some goodies or play a game on your phone.

Set a routine - If you're self-isolating, in quarantine or working from home, set and maintain routines. Make time for exercise using YouTube or a fitness app, cooking your favourite meals, and getting in touch with friends. If you're working remotely, allocate specific work hours and take regular breaks.

Unleash your creativity - A creative project will help focus the mind. Dust off your painting kit or reorganise your décor. Do an online language course or download a yoga app. There are thousands of tutorials on YouTube on just about any hobby – so why not learn how to knit, draw, dance? The digital world is your oyster.

Have a balanced perspective - It's natural to be affected by the outbreak of any new disease. Just remember, for most people, the symptoms of COVID-19 are mild and similar to a flu. Australia has one of the world's best healthcare systems. Everything is being done to ensure communities are safe and protected.

Help others - Happiness is helping others and it is also good for your mental health. Look out for those in your own personal networks who may need support. Look in on your mates to see if you can help with essential supplies, or send an order of goodies to someone who may be doing it tough.



Remember - This is temporary. Physical distancing measures are enforced to slow the spread of COVID-19. We must all play our part. Our communities have rallied together in times of adversity to care for each other before, and we will do so again. We're all in this together.

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

ACON confidential counselling 02 9206200 or
1800 184 527 or visit
<https://www.acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/mental-health/>

QLife 1800 184 527 (6pm-10pm)

Webchat: [www.qlife.org.au/](http://www qlife.org.au/) (3pm-midnight,
every day)

LifeLine on 13 11 14 (24 hours/7 days) Text: 0477
13 11 14 (6pm – midnight AEDT, 7 nights) Chat
online: www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat

(7pm - midnight, 7 nights) or visit
www.lifeline.org.au

Beyond Blue Covid-19 support line on 1800 512
348 or visit www.beyondblue.org.au

Where to get reliable information

If you want to find reliable resources to keep yourself up to date with what is happening with COVID-19, you can:

- call the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080
- visit the NSW Health COVID-19 website for the latest information and advice <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/covid-19-latest.aspx>

- for information tailored to LGBTQ communities, visit ACON's COVID-19 Clearinghouse: www.acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/covid19/

Rainbow Health Victoria

Recommendations for services coordinating or delivering health and community services to LGBTIQ people:

- Acknowledge the potential for COVID-19 to have a disproportionate impact on the health, mental health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ communities
- Promote and enhance LGBTIQ community-controlled and LGBTIQ-inclusive service delivery
- Develop messages about community resilience and increase initiatives to provide community support through adaptive means
- Share experience and knowledge in order to develop understanding of the impacts on LGBTIQ communities in real time and effective ways to respond rapidly through research, policy, resources and programs.

Source acknowledgements:

ACON – www.acon.org.au

Lifeline – www.lifeline.org.au

NSW Health – www.health.nsw.gov.au

BeyondBlue – www.beyondblue.org.au

Rainbow Health Victoria -

www.rainbowhealthvic.org.au/media/pages/research-resources/research-briefing-paper-covid-19-impacts-for-lgbtqi-communities-and-implications-for-services/817379592-1586396368/rainbow-health-victoria-research-briefing-paper-covid-19.pdf