

# Tolerating Uncertainty and Managing Anxiety During COVID-19



As the COVID-19 situation continues, so too does the anxiety surrounding it. If you're prone to anxiety, COVID-19 might have you feeling pretty distressed and worried. Most people feel like this at one time or another in their lives. In certain situations it's quite common to feel some level of anxiety. Sometimes, anxiety can even be helpful by making us more alert and focused, encouraging us to perform at our best. However, anxiety is NOT helpful when it becomes intense or persistent and starts getting in the way of our daily lives. Anxiety can present itself in the things we feel, think and do. It's important that we learn to manage these feelings to limit the impact they have on our lives and the lives of those around us.

eLiPSE  
Electronic Clinical Pathways to Service Excellence

Anxiety can be well-managed, if we can recognise the signs:

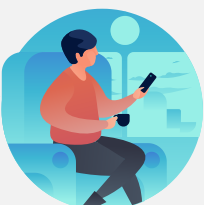


## Mind

Excessive worrying, difficulty concentrating, irritability, tiring easily or being restless or 'on edge'.

## Body

Panic attacks, changes in temperature (hot or cold), muscle tension, aches or soreness, shortness of breath, nausea, increased heart rate, sleep disturbance, headaches, dizziness and more



## Behaviour

Avoiding certain situations and using other behaviours to cope such as watching more TV than usual (Netflix) eating, using or other substances

# Keep Active and Healthy

Ensure you are giving your body the nutrients it needs by keeping a well-balanced diet and trying to limit foods that are high in sugar and saturated fats. This can help you sleep better, maintain your energy, and can give you a greater sense of well-being. Caffeine also needs to be limited as it can produce similar symptoms to anxiety and/or worsen feelings of anxiousness. As well as caffeine, it is important to avoid alcohol and other drugs, as these can worsen symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Keeping your body moving can also help to improve how you cope and sleep, and is a good way to distract you from your worries. The current circumstances can make exercising difficult, but simply limiting the amount of time you spend sitting is beneficial for both your physical and mental health. You can also consider adding stretching, walking, yoga, or strength exercises to your day.

## Practice Mindfulness

Mindfulness activities can help focus your attention, awareness, and breathing which can help with relaxation and stress reduction. There are many ways to practice relaxation, including mindfulness activities, breathing exercises, meditation, yoga, and muscle relaxation. One example is a diaphragmatic breathing exercise. By concentrating on slow, deep breathing, you can distract yourself from unpleasant thoughts or sensations.



Find a quiet, comfortable place with minimal distractions and then follow these steps:

1. Take one normal breath;
2. Now take a deep breath (in through your nose until your chest and stomach rise);
3. Allow your belly to fully expand and then exhale slowly;
4. Repeat as needed

Another mindfulness exercise you could try when feeling anxious is the '3, 2, 1' activity, which gets you to think about and focus on:

- 3 things you can see
- 2 things you can hear and
- 1 thing you can feel

## Stay Connected

Staying connected is important for coping and improving mental health. Social distancing and staying at home can make it difficult to stay connected with others. Using instant messenger and video can help maintain communication with your family and friends

If you are feeling overwhelmed or as though you cannot cope, seek some support:

- Lifeline: 13 11 14 or visit [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)
- Samaritans: 13 52 46
- Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 or visit [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)
- Suicide Call Back: 1300 659 467