

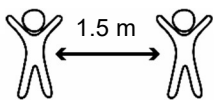
# COVID-19

## Tips for managing stress

### COVID-19 – tips for managing stress



[COVID-19](#) (or coronavirus) is a new disease that can make people sick. It spreads from person to person. COVID-19 has made many thousands of people sick across the world. It is impacting everyone's lives, including autistic people and their families and carers.



There are new [social distancing](#) rules to try to stop COVID-19 spreading from person to person. We have to stay at home. We have to stay 1.5 metres away from people who don't live with us. These rules change the way we work, shop and have fun. We do not know how long we will have to follow these rules. We do not know when we will be able to go back to our routines.

**It is normal to worry about diseases that can make people sick.**

**It is normal to feel stressed when our routines change.**

**There are things we can do to help us cope with change and uncertainty. Here are some tips from autistic people.**

#### Get informed



We can feel less worried when we know the facts about COVID-19. Don't get the news from Facebook or YouTube. The best information comes from governments and health organisations:

- [Australian Government Coronavirus Health Alert](#)
- National Coronavirus Health Information Line (24/7 telephone line); Ph 1800 020 080
- Coronavirus Australia app is available from [Apple App Store](#) and [Google Play](#)
- [World Health Organization Coronavirus Pandemic](#)
- [World Health Organization Global Research on Coronavirus Disease](#)

- [John Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center \(USA\)](#)

## Start a new routine



We will need to make new routines. Changes to our routines can make us feel anxious. It can help us feel better when we find new ways to do the things we like. Some suggestions are:

- If programs are not showing on TV at their regular times, find the program online
- Try to do some things at similar times to when you would do them at school/work/or in a regular day. For example, have your lunch and morning tea breaks at the same time.
- Find out what a normal day at home during COVID will be like for you and try to make a schedule using words or pictures.
- Make sure to include activities that you are passionate about that can be done at home (e.g. playing a video game, reading a book, sorting objects, quiet time)

## Take a break



COVID-19 stories are on the news, social media and TV. Our family and friends may be talking a lot about COVID-19.

Hearing about COVID-19 all the time can make us feel stressed. Don't watch or listen to the news all the time. Only check the news once or twice a day. It is OK to ask family and friends to not talk about COVID-19. Here are some other tips:

- Speak with a friend about your special interests
- Use headphones to block out the sound of news programs if they are becoming stressful.
- Use sensory toys or activities to help calm you or get the nervous energy out (e.g. rocking on a rocking chair, bouncing on a gym ball, playing with a slinky or Rubik's Cube, spinning around to music in your room, jumping on the trampoline)

- Make sure to get some exercise every day.

## Make an autism-friendly space



Staying home for a long time can make us feel anxious. We may need to make a safe, quiet space that is away from other people living in our house. Some tips for making an autism-friendly space at home are:

- Find a space that is for only you to use (e.g. bedroom, a special corner in the family room)
- Agree on rules with other people living in your house (e.g. if the door is closed please do not come in, music must be turned off by 9pm)
- Fill the space with activities or toys or objects that help you to calm down (e.g. colouring in, headphones for dancing, textured fabrics, stimming toys, technology such as iPads or computers)
- Take yourself to your space when you are feeling anxious or tell someone you trust that you need to use your space.
- When you are calm, you can leave your space and get on with the rest of your routine.

## Eat healthy food and exercise



Healthy food and exercise can make us feel good. Make and eat healthy meals each day. Find new ways to exercise at home. Some tips for staying healthy are:

- Choose exercises you enjoy
- Make exercise a part of your daily routine (e.g. do some stretches at 3pm every day)
- Give the exercise structure (e.g. do the same walking route)
- Pick foods and recipes you like to eat
- Try a new recipe from the [Spectrum Cooking Program](#) (Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism)
- Have fun!

## Remember

**TEMPORARY**

Most people who get COVID-19 will not get very sick. But people with diabetes, heart conditions or breathing problems may get a worse case of COVID-19.

Scientists are working hard to learn more about COVID-19.

The changes to our routines are temporary. We will eventually be able to go back to our normal routines.

## Get help



If you feel worried, talk with someone you trust.

You can call one of these telephone support services if you are very worried:

- Lifeline 131114
- Beyond Blue 1300 224 636
- Mens Line Australia 1300 789 978
- Kids Helpline 1800 551 800
- headspace 1800 650 890