

# Taking Care of You

## TIPS FOR RESIDENTS OF LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES



The Coronavirus (COVID-19) has caused major life disruptions. In our lifetime, we have never dealt with so many variables impacting you, our families, and staff of long-term care facilities. Restrictions have been imposed on visitation and daily activities, and there is great concern about stopping the spread of the virus. As difficult as this pandemic is, it is important for you to take care yourself.

*This is such a stressful time for everyone. Know that many people are thinking of you! Know also that your caregivers are trying their best to keep you and all other residents safe.*

The following information may be helpful to you.

### TYPICAL REACTIONS TO STRESS MAY INCLUDE:

- Anxiety, worry, or fear
- Concern about others
- Uncertainty
- Loneliness
- Anger
- Frustration
- Sadness
- Feelings of grief and loss
- Desire to use alcohol or drugs to cope
- Symptoms of depression
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

## Tips for Self-Care

**Anxiety, worry, and fear about your health and well-being and those of family and friends can feel overwhelming. Consider the following ideas:**

- Call or text family and friends often. If you don't have a phone, ask the facility to provide one so that you may stay in touch with others.
- If you have a smartphone or computer or if one can be loaned to you, hold virtual face-to-face conversations. Ask friends and facility staff for help if you need it.
- Talk with facility staff about options for visitation such as talking by phone while seeing family and friends through a facility window or visiting outdoors in nice weather.
- Write letters, notes, and cards to family, friends, and other residents. Share special memories of your time together. Ask others to do the same.
- If the facility has social media pages such as Facebook, like their page, and post short videos, encouraging words, etc. If the facility doesn't have a Facebook page, ask them to create one so that all interested residents can post messages on the site.



## Caring for others.

- Ask your activities director or social worker if there is something you and other residents could do for people living outside your community. Some examples might be:
  - Knit baby blankets to donate to a local children’s hospital
  - Plant a backyard garden and donate the harvest
  - Paint and inquire about a dedicated space to create an art gallery
  - Clip coupons to give to staff members
  - Start a reading buddies’ program with the children of your staff members (using the phone or computer)
- Staff may also be overwhelmed with concerns for their own family and work responsibilities. Offer compassion, a listening ear, or write notes of encouragement.



## Emotions such as frustration, loneliness, or anger are all to be expected.

- Positive coping skills include exercise, hobbies, listening to music, reading a good book, watching a movie, etc. Set aside time each day to do at least one enjoyable activity. Stay informed but limit the amount of news that you are listening to or reading each day.
- If it helps you to stay busy, ask the facility social services and activities staff what you can do to help out. Examples could include reading mail for residents that need assistance, walking with someone else outside, and leading a sing-a-long over the intercom system.

**Depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or other mental health issues.** If you are feeling depressed, talk with your doctor, nurse or a family member or friend. Lots of people who’ve never felt depressed are experiencing a sense of loss because they feel isolated, have feelings of losing control over their normal daily activities, etc. These changes may cause you to have less energy, lessen your ability to concentrate, find it hard to sleep or want to sleep all the time.

## RESOURCES & MORE INFORMATION

National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care

<https://theconsumervoice.org/issues/other-issues-and-resources/covid-19>

National Center on Elder Abuse

<https://ncea.acl.gov/Resources/COVID-19.aspx>

## Need Help?

Talk to the facility administrator, social worker, or a staff person you trust.

Contact the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program which advocates for residents of nursing homes, assisted living facilities, board and care homes, and similar adult care homes. Visit [https://theconsumervoice.org/get\\_help](https://theconsumervoice.org/get_help) to find your state’s program.

Contact your state’s licensing and certification agency which is responsible for overseeing long-term care facilities and investigating complaints. To locate your state licensing and certification agency visit [https://theconsumervoice.org/get\\_help](https://theconsumervoice.org/get_help).

Contact **Eldercare Locator** to locate resources in your state. Eldercare Locator is a national public service to help older adults and caregivers connect with local aging and disability services. Call **1-800-677-1116** or visit [www.eldercare.acl.gov](http://www.eldercare.acl.gov).

