

COVID-19 and Depression

The stress associated with the COVID-19 pandemic affects all of us, and in many different ways. Social isolation, an uncertain future and lack of access to favorite activities can present especially difficult challenges for those with existing mental health conditions such as depression.

What is depression?

Depression is a mental health condition affecting both mind and body. It's much more profound and devastating than simply feeling sad.

How does depression affect physical health?

People with depression are more susceptible to infections. The added stress can worsen a host of preexisting conditions while making it harder for sufferers to access medications and treatments.

What are some signs of depression, especially right now?

- Unusually intense fear about the spread of COVID-19 and its impact on loved ones
- Anxiety about personal finances
- Anxiety about shopping for necessities
- Social withdrawal
- Heightened feelings of hopelessness about the future



What steps can you take to help fight back against depression?

- Follow as normal a routine as possible
- Limit engagement with news outlets and social media
- Be physically active
- Try to get enough sleep
- Avoid alcohol and drugs
- Focus on what you can control
- Maintain social relationships (even if that means finding new ways to connect)

There are many resources available for people who are suffering from or at risk for depression.

When should you seek help?

If you or someone you care about experiences these feelings over a prolonged period, consider seeking professional help.

- Constant feelings of sadness or emptiness
- Sleeping significantly more or less than usual
- Agitation
- A deep lack of energy
- Irritability and pessimism
- Loss of interest in things that used to bring pleasure
- Inability to concentrate
- Suicidal thoughts



Suicide Prevention

In Illinois, suicide is the 11th leading cause of death, with a toll of 1,000 lives lost each year. For young adults 15 to 34 years of age, suicide is the third leading cause of death in Illinois.

If you know someone at immediate risk of self-harm, suicide or hurting another person:

- Ask the tough question: “Are you considering suicide?”
- Listen to the person without judgment
- Call 911 or the local emergency number, or text TALK to 741741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor
- Stay with the person until professional help arrives
- Try to remove any weapons, medications or other potentially harmful objects

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, a prevention hotline can help. NAMI Chicago is a local resource for support, education and emergency help. Call them at 833-626-4244 or visit <https://www.namichicago.org/suicide>.

Another resource is The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, available 24/7 at 800-273-8255. During a crisis, people who are hard of hearing can call 800-799-4889.

