

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

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Canadian Mental Health Week: Niagara Health offers tips to improve your mental wellness during pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented change for everyone. We have all experienced significant changes to our work and personal lives, which has resulted in added stress and worry.

“During a time like this, it is understandable that people may be feeling worried, anxious and overwhelmed,” says Dr. Maxine Lewis, the Joint Chief of Mental Health and Addictions for Niagara Health and St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton. “While you are staying at home practicing physical distancing, make sure you stay in touch with each other, through phone or virtual platforms, and reach out if you need support.”

To mark Canadian Mental Health week, Dr. Lewis is providing advice to help you maintain good mental health.

- Identify what it is you’re worried about and ask if it is under your control or not. Focus on the things you can control.
- Keep to a routine. Wake up at the same time each day, eat well and get a good night’s sleep.
- Get fresh air: Go for a walk or try another form of exercise.
- Do breathing exercises: Put a hand on your stomach and take a deep breath in for four seconds and breathe out for four seconds.
- Limit your exposure to negative stories about the pandemic and get your information from reliable sources. Devote a certain amount of time each day to those stories, but then read good-news stories that bring a smile to your face. Laughter is good medicine for the soul.
- Chronicle moments of hope and gratitude. Consider keeping a gratitude journal and write the things for which you are grateful. It will help you focus on the good in your day.
- Try to limit unhealthy habits like drinking too much alcohol.

“There are some strategies that can help, no matter what your current level of stress is,” says Dr. Lewis. “If, however, you find that your anxiety is reaching a point where these strategies are not helpful, there are resources through Niagara Health and in the community to support you.”

During the pandemic, Niagara Health’s Mental Health and Addiction Program remains in operation and available to those needing assistance.

To learn more about mental health and addiction resources across Niagara, visit the Niagara Health [website](#) or call the Mental Health and Addictions [Access Line](#) at 1-866-550-5205. For children, youth and families across Niagara Region, counselling and supports are offered 24/7 through the Crisis Line at 1-800-263-4944.

If someone is experiencing a mental health or addictions emergency, they should go to the nearest Emergency Department or call 911.

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