



Managing Stress in a Pandemic

Persistent talk about Pandemic Influenza/H1N1 can be stressful for some people. With awareness, planning and responsible actions, we can get through this with a minimal amount of disruption.

What are common reactions of people during stressful events?

Everyone reacts to situations differently. Many people cope by doing the typical things they do to manage daily stress. Some adults and children, however, may experience reactions that include:

Emotions: feelings of sadness, anger, worry, helplessness

Thinking: confusion; poor concentration; problems remembering

Behavior: changes in eating habits or sleeping patterns; isolation; irritability

Physical: tiredness, hyperactivity, head and stomach aches

Spiritual: change in one's beliefs or anger about the event

What can you do?

- Learn the facts about the H1N1 and seasonal flu, including how they are spread, symptoms, vaccine options and other things you can do to limit your exposure. Sources of information could include www.sedgwickcounty.org, www.kdheks.gov and www.cdc.gov.
- Find out about plans at work or school so that you can be prepared for potential challenges that come from any disruptions to your normal routine.
- Make plans for yourself or family members if someone in the household becomes ill.
- Balance the need for information with the stress we may experience from overexposure to media presentations about the illness.
- Follow good health practices such as washing your hands and not going to work or school while you are sick.

- Have basic care items available such as tissues, hand sanitizer, regular medications, cleaning supplies, and food so that you are prepared if the flu does occur and you have to stay home.
- Be aware of your feelings and talk to others about your concerns, especially if you are feeling overwhelmed by these events.

What can you do for your children?

- Remember children do not think about things in the same way as adults. They may have fears about what they see and hear because they do not fully understand. Your children may be afraid about what will happen to them.
- Limit exposure to disturbing stories or pictures.
- Talk with your children about how they are feeling, especially if they are afraid.
- Let children know you have a plan and share the plan highlights to provide appropriate reassurance about their safety and care. For example, tell them who will care for them if you become ill.
- Maintain a normal routine unless circumstances change.
- The age of the child should guide how much and the type of information you share about the disaster. Also, your child's age should guide the words you use to share information.
- Younger children should be given fewer details. All children, regardless of age, need comfort and attention from the adults in their lives during and after traumatic events.

For more information :

Call [COMCARE](http://www.comcare.org) of Sedgwick County, (316) 660-7540 or the Mental Health Crisis Help Line, (316) 660-7500.

Or visit www.sedgwickcounty.org.