

# Health workers: care for your mental health



**As a healthcare worker on the frontline of COVID-19 you are going to experience stress during this time. Here are some ways to care for yourself, your family and colleagues:**

## Care for yourself

### Minimize exposure to news sources that cause anxiety

Seek information only from trusted sources like the:

- [www.nicd.ac.za](http://www.nicd.ac.za)
- [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV)
- [www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019](http://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019)
- [www.sacoronavirus.co.za](http://www.sacoronavirus.co.za)

### Look after your chronic condition if you have one:

Adhere to your treatment.

### Have healthy work habits

- Manage your time sensibly.
- Take scheduled breaks.
- Remind yourself of your purpose as a clinician.
- Be sure you are clear about your role and responsibilities.

### Look after your health:

- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise, eat sensibly, minimise alcohol and avoid smoking.
- Take time to do a relaxing breathing exercise each day.
- Find a fun or creative activity to do.

## Use your senses to relieve family stress

### Sight

If possible go outside together and appreciate something about nature; watch an uplifting movie.



### Sound

Relax and listen to music together; tell stories.



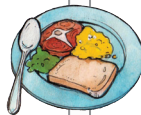
### Touch

Give each other a hug. Remember to first shower/bath/wash and put on clean clothes if arriving home from work.



### Smell

Be aware of the smells of home cooked food and clean washed hands.



### Taste

Make meals and enjoy them together.

### Movement

Engage in physical activity like dancing and laughing together.



## Support your colleagues

### Work with care:

- Treat colleagues and patients with respect.
- Support each other. Consider setting up a staff support group.
- Instead of complaining, rather focus on finding solutions to problems.



### Identify traumatic stress or burnout in yourself and your colleagues and get help:

- Nightmares, flashbacks, avoidance of people/situations, jumpiness or a feeling of detachment.
- Muscle tension, restlessness, irritability, difficulty sleeping, poor concentration, tiredness.

### Encourage teamwork:

- Examine the team's workload to see how you can share tasks.
- Identify what needs to be changed to make the job easier: equipment, drug supply, training, space.
- Discuss each team member's role. Encourage everyone to participate in the team.

### Where to get help:

- The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for Western Cape government healthcare workers: **0800 611093** or send a 'please call me' \***134\*905#**: Counselling services are offered free of charge.
- Mental health helpline - Counselling and support for patient with mental illness or substance misuse **0800 12 13 14** (24 hour helpline).
- Chat online with a counsellor 7 days a week from 9am - 4pm via the Cipla Whatsapp Chat Line **076 882 2775**.
- SMS **31393** or **32312** and a counsellor will call you back - available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

