



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Substance Use Recovery Guidance for Patients

Updated 03/24/20

Triggers and relapse

- **You are not alone if you are feeling stressed;** the COVID pandemic is creating major disruptions and creating deep stress across our communities.
 - Our normal routines are changing in terms of work, childcare, family care, time with friends, and recreation.
 - We may have anxiety about our health or that of loved ones and about changes in our economy and finances.
 - We are isolated from hugs and in person social interactions.
- This stress may put us all at greater risk for alcohol or drug misuse and for those in recovery, it can lead to slips or relapse
- In the face of these challenges it is important we increase our attention to self-care. Some simple but powerful self-care activities include:
 - Increasing valued recovery activities such as groups, counseling, sponsor meetings (virtual when possible, see some options below)
 - Meditation and/or conscious breathing to quiet our minds (See apps below)
 - Exercise to relieve stress and keep our bodies healthy
 - Practicing gratefulness for the positive things we have
 - Spending quality time (albeit often virtually) with people we love or care about.
 - Giving to and helping others

Treatment considerations

Medications

- Ongoing access to addiction treatment medication and naloxone is essential.
 - Discuss medication access with clinician and pharmacy
 - It may be possible to receive longer term prescriptions than usual or refills
 - Only reduce your dose of medication if you cannot access your regular dose or anticipate a period without access.
 - Some patients may be able to switch to long-acting medications, such as monthly injections of buprenorphine or naltrexone to help assure consistent treatment.
 - If you are already receiving monthly injectable medications
 - Maintain contact with your clinician regarding scheduled appointments.
 - If you cannot make an appointment for injection when due or supplies are limited, you may be able to switch to pill or film form of medication.
 - Work with your clinician to adjust other types of monitoring (self-report, urine toxicology, breath testing) as needed and frequency that is best for you clinically.
 - Travel should be limited, but if you must travel be sure you have adequate medications.
- it is important to protect others thru social distancing, especially if you have symptoms associated with COVID 19 (fever, cough and/or new breathing problems) or have been exposed.
 - Call before picking up meds or arriving for care so safe arrangements can be made.

Counseling and meetings

- In-person meetings are discouraged for now to avoid potential viral spread. Consider the online and app alternatives below or ones offered by your providers.
- If you attend in person groups and meetings
 - Maintain at least 6-feet between yourself and others at all times (“social distancing”).
 - Avoid hugging, shaking hands and holding hands. (Try air hugs and bows.)
- Some resources to stay connected from home
 - Virtual Mutual Support Groups
 - SOS Recovery Organization, Strafford county, NH. Local and user friendly. <https://straffordrecovery.org/virtual-meetings/>
 - SMART Recovery- 12 Step alternative: <https://www.smartrecovery.org/>
 - AA: <http://aa-intergroup.org/directory.php>
 - NA: <https://virtual-na.org/>
 - In the Rooms: <https://www.intherooms.com/home/>
 - Recovery Apps
 - Connections, <https://www.addictionpolicy.org/connections-app>
 - Sobergrid, <https://www.sobergrid.com/>
 - I Am Sober, <https://iamsobers.com>
 - Sober Tool, <https://www.sobertool.com>
 - Mindfulness Apps
 - Insight Timer guided meditations (free): <https://insighttimer.com/>
 - Stop, Breath, & Think, <https://www.stopbreathethink.com>
 - UCLA Mindful, <https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/ucla-mindful-app>
 - 10% Happier, <https://www.tenpercent.com>
 - Positive affirmation Apps
 - Think-Up, <https://www.thinkup.me>
 - Kwippy – search your app store
 - Shine, <http://daily.shinetext.com>
 - Smiling Mind <https://www.smilingmind.com.au>

Addressing Special Risks

- Smoking and vaping
 - Smoking or vaping any substance may increase lung irritation and risk of viral infection.
 - Persons with lung disease are at risk of more serious COVID infection outcomes
 - Nicotine treatments available over the counter (patch, gum, lozenge, inhaler) or other medications may help you discontinue or minimize smoking and vaping.
 - Support is available at
 - www.TryToStopNH.org or
 - 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-866)
- Age and other medical conditions
 - Persons over age 60 and people with medical conditions such as heart, lung or kidney disease, high blood pressure or cancer have risk of more severe COVID infection.
 - Work with your clinicians to be sure these health conditions are being treated.
 - Make special effort to practice safe hygiene and social distancing.

Further resources at DH Substance Use and Mental Health Initiative website, <https://med.dartmouth-hitchcock.org/sumhi.html>

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