

## **Handling Public Health Emergencies**

The information in this brochure can help you cope with anxiety related to public health emergencies.

It is natural to be upset when you think the health – or the health of your loved ones - is threatened.

Pay attention to your own feelings and take care of your own emotional needs. You can better help friends and family members handle their concerns.

### **Uncertainty**

Anxiety can be related to fear of the unknown. It is normal to feel anxious and worried about a spreading disease, especially if there is no known cause or cure.

## **Everyone reacts differently to a public health risk. These are normal reactions:**

### **Physical**

headaches  
tiredness  
increased pulse  
high blood pressure  
changes in appetite  
unexplained aches or pains  
trouble sleeping  
stomach aches

### **Emotional**

panic  
anxiety  
distrust  
fear  
anger  
irritability  
sadness  
depression  
blame  
feeling overwhelmed  
increased stress

### **Mental**

troubling concentrating  
problems at work or school  
memory problems  
troubling thoughts  
concern about health issues

### **Behavioral**

avoiding others  
substance abuse  
excessive cleaning or washing  
being overly cautious

## **Here are some ways you can cope with stress and anxiety:**

- Limit your exposure to graphic news stories
- Get accurate, timely information from reliable sources
- Educate yourself about the specific health hazard
- Maintain your normal daily routine, if possible
- Exercise, eat well and rest
- Stay active – physically and mentally
- Stay in touch with family and friends
- Find comfort in your spiritual and personal beliefs
- Keep a sense of humor
- Share your concerns with others

## Stay Connected

The fear associated with a public health emergency can push people apart.

People who are normally close to family and friends may avoid contact because they are afraid they might get sick or get someone else sick.

It is important to stay connected with others. Use the phone, e-mail, or other electronic means of communication.

If you are anxious about a health risk, talk to someone who can help. This may be your doctor, a family member, friend, member of the clergy, teacher or mental health professional.

If you notice a big change in a loved one, friend or co-worker, reach out to them. Make some time to talk. Watching out for others shows you care. It can be comforting to both of you.

If you or someone you know is having a hard time managing their emotions, seek help from a medical or mental health professional.

## Get Reliable Information

When we face uncertainty about health risks, it is important to keep things in perspective.

Get information during public health emergencies from:

- Your doctor or healthcare provider
- Your local health department
- The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) website at <http://nj.gov/health/> (800) 367-6543
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

1-800-CDC-INFO (4636) for assistance in English and Spanish

TTY: 1-888-232-6348

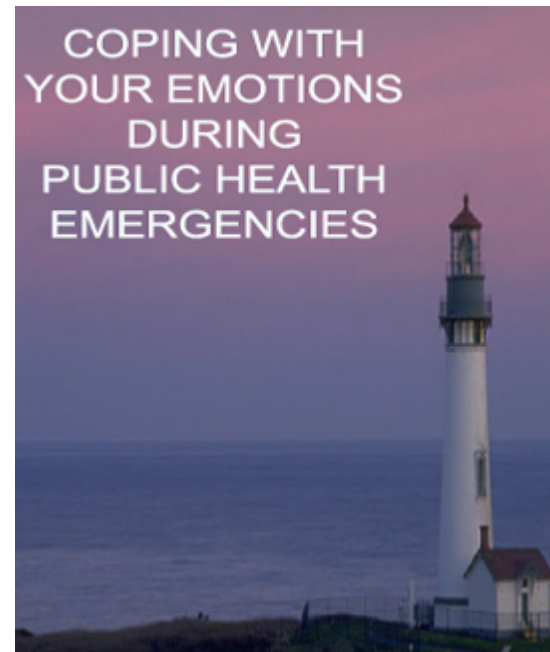
E-mail: [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov)

**This publication available on-line at [www.disastermentalhealthnj.com](http://www.disastermentalhealthnj.com).**

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## New Jersey Department of Human Services

**Toll-free HelpLine  
877-294-HELP (4357)**

**TTY: 877-294-4356**

**Trained counselors  
available free of charge  
24 hours a day**

