

Coronavirus, Mental Health and Hispanics in the United States

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The coronavirus and COVID-19 pandemic are causing stress across the United States, and communities of color are being heavily impacted—physically, mentally, and financially.

This fact sheet explains what we know about the new coronavirus and how it is affecting Hispanic Americans. It also offers tips on how Hispanics can manage the stress and mental health issues that might occur during this difficult time.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease that affects the lungs and airways that is caused by a novel coronavirus. Symptoms of COVID-19 can be mild or severe and can appear 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus. Some people have no symptoms from the illness and are unaware that they have COVID-19, while others have severe symptoms that could result in death from the disease.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste and smell,
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea (a feeling of sickness with an inclination to vomit), and
- Diarrhea.

Although older people and people with underlying conditions (such as diabetes, asthma, or liver disease) are most at risk for severe symptoms, people of any age can get COVID-19, including children and young adults.

To prevent the spread of COVID-19 the following steps are recommended by the [Centers of Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC):

- Maintain “social distance” or staying about 6 feet or two arm lengths away from other people
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, countertops, handles, or other items shared with other people
- Wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth when you are out in public places

You should follow these precautions even if you do not have symptoms of the disease.

How COVID-19 is affecting Hispanic Americans?

Because of long-standing inequities in our country’s systems and structure, Hispanics and other communities of color are at higher risk for physical, mental, and financial problems due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Hispanic population has been hit hard by the COVID-19 outbreak. In some areas of the country, including New York, Oregon, and Utah, Hispanic people are contracting COVID-19 at much higher rates than White people. They are also more likely to need to go to the hospital and 2.8 times more likely to die of the disease.

For many reasons, Hispanic people are at an elevated risk of COVID-19 exposure and related hospitalization and death. These may include:

- **Inability to fully adhere to stay-at-home recommendations due to job.** Many Hispanics

work essential jobs in grocery stores, transportation, health care, and manufacturing that may increase their risk of exposure to COVID-19. The U.S. Department of Labor reports that only 13% of Hispanics have jobs that allow telework, compared with 27% for non-Hispanic Americans. Hispanics are also less likely to have jobs that offer paid sick leave or family leave. They risk exposure to the virus while commuting or working in public areas or close quarters. Hispanic people may have to continue working to support their families. In addition, many Hispanic people have lost their jobs due to the pandemic.

- **Lack of adequate practice of social distancing due to living situations.** Hispanic people are more likely than Whites to live in cities and in close quarters, where COVID-19 spreads more easily. In addition, Hispanic people are disproportionately represented in jails, prisons, and detention centers, where the disease can also spread rapidly.
- **Disparities in health care, ranging from underlying medical conditions to health insurance.** Hispanic people have higher rates of chronic diseases and health problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, and obesity. These conditions are linked to more severe disease, complications, and death from COVID-19.

Hispanics may also find it difficult to seek health care when needed: (1) Hispanics are three times as likely as Whites to have no insurance, which may lead them to worrying about the cost of care. (2) Language and cultural barriers may also pose challenges for Hispanics when they are communicating with health care providers. All these factors may also cause Hispanics to avoid seeking health care when sick. In addition, economic pressures and health risks on Hispanic people put them at greater risk for trauma, grief, and other mental health issues.

What is the link between COVID-19 and Mental Health in Hispanic Americans?

Hispanic people are experiencing trauma and mental health issues for many different reasons during the COVID-19 pandemic. These include:

- Anxiety from not being able to follow stay-at-home recommendations to protect themselves from COVID-19
- Grief over the loss of friends and family members

- Separation from friends and family, especially those who are sick or in the hospital, and potential inability to communicate with health care workers because of language barriers
- Unequal access to technology that allows continuing work, school or social interaction online
- Emotional stress of close living situations and finding care for children out of school
- Financial stress of health care costs, job loss, and more
- Ongoing difficulties accessing health care services

What are the signs of stress and mental health issues?

- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Feeling unsafe or anxious
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other substances
- Strained relationships with family members
- Irritability and blaming others
- Lack of energy
- Unexplained aches and pains

What can you do to manage your stress and mental health issues cause by COVID-19?

- Follow “social distancing” and other steps to prevent COVID-19 as best you can in your situation
- Take a break from watching, reading or listening to the news. Make sure you’re getting your information from trusted sources, such as the [Centers for Disease Control](#).
- Stay in touch with friends and family by phone, video calls or other technology.
- Reach out to churches and other community organizations as many offer online and other virtual opportunities for connection.
- Try to maintain a healthy diet, exercise and sleep routine.
- Obtain or contribute food to local food banks. Some neighborhoods are creating their own food pantries.
- Do not put off urgent and emergency health care for new or chronic illnesses.

- If you cannot work, apply for unemployment insurance in your state. During the pandemic, the rules for who can apply have been loosened.
- Use prayer, meditation or other spiritual practices to find peace in difficult times.
- Share stories of resilience and survival from your past or your cultural heritage.
- Connect to cultural traditions and heritage as they can provide strength in difficult times.
- Use hotlines and other resources when needed.

This resource was prepared by the APA's Council on Minority Mental Health and Health Disparities and the Division of Diversity and Health Equity. It was authored by Emily Paulsen and reviewed by Vabren Watts, Ph.D and Eric Yarbrough, M.D.

Hotlines

If you or someone you know are in distress, free counseling services are available by phone, text, or online chat. Most are available 24/7.

Disaster Distress Helpline

Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746
24/7 crisis counseling for people experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters ([SAMHSA](#))

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Call 800-273-8255 or [Chat with Lifeline](#)
24/7 free and confidential support for people in distress and prevention and crisis resources for you and loved ones. ([Link](#))

Nacional de Prevención del Suicidio

Call 888-628-9454
Lifeline ofrece 24/7, gratuito servicios en español, no es necesario hablar inglés si usted necesita ayuda.

Suicide Prevention for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Call 800-799-4889 or Chat with Lifeline
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>

Crisis Textline Text TALK to 741741

A live, trained Crisis Counselor will respond by text.
([Link](#))

National Helpline Call 800-662-4357

Confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year,

information service, in English and Spanish, for individuals and family members facing mental and/or substance use disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations. Callers can also order free publications and other information. <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator

<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>

Confidential and anonymous source of information for persons seeking treatment facilities in the United States or U.S. Territories for substance use/addiction and/or mental health problems.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

800-799-7233(English and Spanish)
800-787-3224 (TTY) or
Text LOVEIS to 866-331-9474
<https://www.thehotline.org/>
Support for anyone affected by abuse

Veterans Crisis Line

Call 800-273-8255 or text 838255 or [live chat](#)
Connect with the Veterans Crisis Line to reach caring, qualified responders with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Many of them are Veterans themselves. ([VA](#))

Resources for Coping with COVID-19

American Psychiatry Association: Coronavirus and Mental Health: Taking Care of Ourselves During Infectious Disease Outbreaks <https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/apa-blog/2020/02/coronavirus-and-mental-health-taking-care-of-ourselves-during-infectious-disease-outbreaks>

National Medical Association: COVID-19 Resources <https://www.nmanet.org/page/COVID-19-Resources>

NAACP Coronavirus Resources: Report discrimination, tell your story, submit a question, and other resources <https://naacp.org/coronavirus/coronavirus-resources/>

ESSENCE Wellness House Virtual Summit: Videos about COVID-19 and how to stay well, including a video with Patrice A. Harris, MD, MA, psychiatrist and President of the American Medical Association:

- <https://wellnesshouse.essencestudios.com/>
- <https://wellnesshouse.essencestudios.com/session/a-look-inside-covid-19>

Crisis Textline: Text TALK to 741741
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Donde Estamos

- Las crisis no tienen fronteras y afectan a millones de personas alrededor del mundo. Y queremos ayudar a cada una de ellas! Todos merecen tener apoyo emocional gratuito, las 24hrs, al alcance de sus manos.

Crisis Text Line Internacional

- Actualmente estos servicios están disponibles en inglés solamente

Reino Unido – Envía HOME al 852852

- Shout es un afiliado de Crisis Text Line en el Reino

Unido que provee apoyo gratuito, confidencial, las 24hrs vía texto. Shout está disponible en el Reino Unido, incluyendo Inglaterra, Escocia, Gales e Irlanda del Norte.

Canadá– Envía HOME al 741741 o al 686868

- Crisis Text Line por Kids Help Phone es una alianza entre Kids Help Phone y Crisis Text Line, pioneros en tecnología, para proveer a los jóvenes canadienses el primer servicio nacional de texto gratuito, disponible las 24hrs.

Irlanda

- Actualmente está aceptando aplicaciones para Voluntarios de Crisis.

Nueva Zelanda

- Crisis Text Line está trabajando con afiliados locales para lanzar este servicio próximamente.

Todos los afiliados de Crisis Text Line Internacional utilizan la misma tecnología construida por nosotros en Nueva York... de forma gratuita.

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Emotional Wellbeing During the COVID-19 Outbreak <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/current-events/supporting-your-emotional-well-being-during-the-covid-19-outbreak/>

World Health Organization: Mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_2

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: COVID-19 in Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html>