

COVID-19

How to Cope with the Uncertainty and Care for Yourself

News continues to stream in about the growing concerns related to the outbreak of COVID-19 (coronavirus). While obtaining information about the virus is critically important, it can also be overwhelming and hard to filter. It's natural to want to know, "What should I be doing? How can I protect myself and my loved ones? Am I being overconcerned?"

In a word, we're all left feeling "uncertain." There is no "right way" to think or feel about what's happening with this outbreak, but it is important to acknowledge your own, unique reactions. Doing so can go a long way in helping you manage the common, and *normal* feelings many of us are likely to experience, including, but not limited to: insecurity, fear, anxiety, powerlessness and concern for loved ones.

In order to take control of any fears or anxiety, first understand what you're feeling by answering these questions:

1. At what level, in general, are your fears of contracting COVID-19, either from the public or being an employee or direct healthcare provider at KP?
2. What are your greatest concerns at this time (family, travel, the next 3-6 months, the economy, etc)?
3. What kind of information, assurances, or support are you looking for – and can they actually be provided?

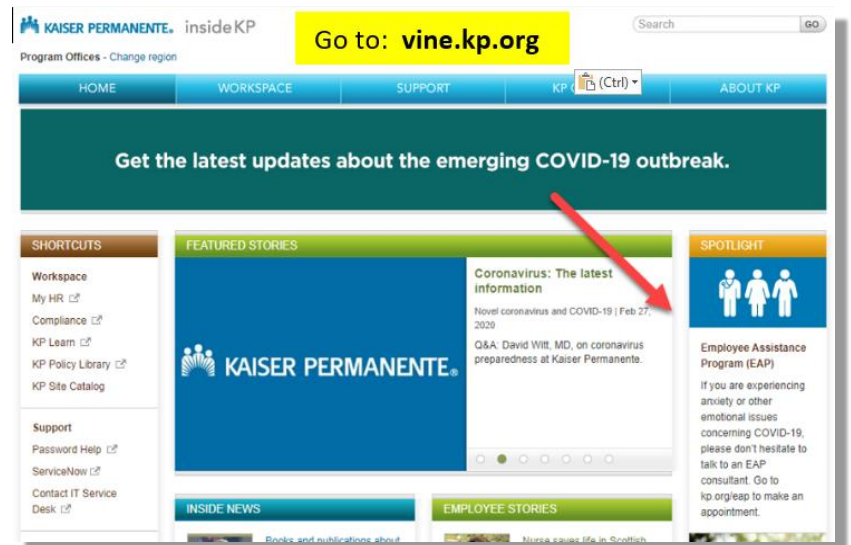
Take a moment to consider your answers. You may realize that it will be hard to get some of the assurances or future information you're looking for. The best you can do are the following things, that are within your control.

Stay informed – As employees of KP, we are fortunate to have access to accurate, real-time information. Our Leadership, Health Care Continuity Team, and Infectious Disease experts are monitoring the situation closely, and are linked with public health and CDC officials to keep everyone apprised of the status and impact of the virus.

As with any evolving situation, it is critical to make decisions based on the most current, accurate information. It's important to get the facts and avoid spreading false or misleading information. Below you will find answers to the most common questions about COVID-19, and what you can do to help protect yourself and others. Be aware of how you and members of your family are reacting to the continuous coverage and protect them and yourself regarding TV, radio, and internet stories.

Talk – Talking, as the situation unfolds, gives us the opportunity to identify and share our personal reactions. Discussion helps us better understand and acknowledge the impact of the circumstances and helps prevent isolation. Connect with your support system – family, friends, colleagues, your community – and talk with them.

Take advantage of your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). If you are experiencing anxiety or other emotional issues concerning COVID-19, please don't hesitate to talk to an EAP consultant. Go to kp.org/eap to make an appt.



Be aware of the emotional impact on those around you – Everyone’s emotions are closer to the surface during this time. Tempers can be shorter, children clingy, and society (as a whole) more on edge. Children, in particular, have “radar” that picks up everything in their environment. They may need more physical contact, assurance, time and patience.

Generated confusion, anxiety, and fear can also result in social stigma and discriminatory behaviors against people perceived to have been in contact with the virus. How we treat others and communicate about COVID-19 is critical to effectively educate and care for our members, patients, communities, and one another, and avoid fueling fear and stigma.

Misinformation about COVID-19 can contribute to stigma and may:

- Drive people to hide the illness to avoid discrimination
- Prevent people from seeking health care immediately
- Discourage people from adopting healthy behaviors

Listen, show compassion, and be helpful. If someone tells you they or someone they know suspects exposure to COVID-19, suggest that they call their health care provider. Show compassion and support. Aim to make all members, patients, and colleagues feel heard, understood, and accepted.



Share the Steps of Prevention. Communicate facts and address myths with colleagues, family, and friends about how the virus spreads. Correct any myths you might hear, while acknowledging that people’s feelings and fears are very real, even if the underlying assumptions are false. Use simple, factual, non-blaming language. For example: Do say “*people who have contracted COVID-19,*” don’t say “*people who are infecting others/spreading the disease.*”

Practice Resilience – Alleviate your fear and anxiety by building your resilience. Learn to manage your feelings while using positive emotions to recover. Consider these two questions in support of yourself:

1. What have you been doing to help cope with this situation?
2. If you have had other stressful situations, how did you cope then?

Don’t let fear or anxiety keep you stuck. Transform your troubling thoughts and feelings into healthy behaviors, like exercise or meditation. Find wellness activities or online resources such as podcasts or programs that can help you relax and reduce stress. Increase activities which are healing for you such as: time with your family, time outdoors, hobbies, getting together with friends, meditation and prayer. Also remember to keep a mixture of activity and relaxation. Maintain as normal a routine as possible.

You can build and support resilience by:

- Focusing on healthy eating, physical exercise and building your immune system,
- Creating a support system of people you trust,
- Helping others when you can, and letting others help you,
- Thinking of new, positive approaches in your reaction to hard situations,
- Being self-compassionate and practicing self-care, and
- Practicing mindfulness, kindness and gratitude as much as you can.

Staying informed, staying healthy, and practicing good judgment are the best things you can do to avoid contracting COVID-19.

Common Questions about COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus that can spread from person to person. Patients with COVID-19 experience mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of fever and cough.

How can I help protect myself and others?

The Steps of Prevention that stop the spread of colds and the flu are recommended:

1. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
2. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
3. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
4. Stay home if you are sick, except to get medical care.
5. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away and wash your hands.
6. Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces you touch.



Is there a vaccine or treatment?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. We are proud that the U.S. National Institutes of Health has selected the Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute Vaccine and Treatment Evaluation Unit to begin clinical testing of a vaccine against COVID-19.

At this time, the best way to prevent infection is to wash your hands frequently and avoid being exposed to this virus. And while there is currently no specific antiviral treatment, people with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.

What should I do if I recently traveled to an affected area and am now sick?

If you feel sick with fever or cough, you should first call the advice number on the back of your Kaiser Permanente membership card for instructions. It's important to call before going into a medical facility so that you are directed to the most appropriate care and we can take precautions to protect other members, patients, and employees.

Please notify your manager in accordance with existing sick policies and procedures. If a physician determines that you should stay out of the workplace, notify your manager and follow physician instructions regarding work restrictions and follow-up procedures.

What should I do if I think I've been exposed to COVID-19?

If you think you may have been exposed to COVID-19, please notify your manager before returning to work and call the advice number on the back of your Kaiser Permanente membership card for instructions. For details on our HR policy on possible employee exposure to COVID-19, please refer to the [KP Policy Library](#).

What other precautions should I take?

Front-line health care workers should ask their managers about any specific procedures for COVID-19 at their medical facility.

At home, consider reviewing your emergency plan to be prepared for any unexpected emergency and consider how you might protect the rest of your family if one of you gets sick.

If your reaction to COVID-19 outbreak is interfering with any aspect of your personal or professional life, please contact your local EAP Consultant.

kp.org/eap