

ARQ Centre of Expertise
for the Impact of Disasters
and Crises

How to deal with stress during self-isolation or quarantine

Information for people in self-isolation or home
quarantine [1] because of coronavirus

Possible psychological and social effects of self-isolation due to coronavirus infection

You may encounter all sorts of emotions and reactions when you have to self-isolate. You might:

- Feel worried – about your own physical wellbeing, infecting members of your family, calling in sick to work, and everything you need to take care of.
- Imagine that the worst-case scenario will come true, making you feel anxious, sad, unsettled or restless.
- Feel guilty about your own behaviour and choices, which may have caused you – or others – to get infected.
- Feel angry or anxious because your freedom is temporarily limited.
- Feel moody or irritable.
- Feel lonely and isolated because your contact with others is limited. Feel hurt by others judging you.
- Experience feelings of restlessness and powerlessness, or a lack of control.
- Be more alert than usual or feel unsafe.

How do you take good care of yourself?

It's totally normal to experience these kinds of emotions during your self-isolation. So don't forget to take good care of yourself! Here's a few tips:

- Evaluate your own physical wellbeing calmly and objectively. How am I feeling today? How do I feel compared to yesterday or this morning?
- Structure your days. Create a new routine by making a schedule. Set yourself realistic goals here – achieving these goals can help give you a sense of control. Try to wake up and go to bed around the same time each day. Also make sure you eat enough and stay physically active as much as possible.
- Try to accept and embrace your emotions. Give yourself time to understand your feelings and needs. Talk to people you trust about how you're feeling.
- Don't spend too much time following the news about coronavirus – via social media or other channels. Consuming and processing too much information about the pandemic may cause unnecessary anxiety.

- Try to distract yourself from your worries – there's no use in worrying about all the bad things that could happen. Stay active. Watch a good film, pick up that book you've been meaning to read for ages or play a fun game. This is a great opportunity to do all the things you never got around to.
- Try to stay mentally active: keep a journal, play games that challenge you or do crossword puzzles.
- Keep in touch with your friends, family and colleagues. Stay in touch via WhatsApp or call them for a video chat – or just have a good old-fashioned phone call.
- Try to see the humour of the situation and look for silver linings. This can help keep feelings of hopelessness at bay.
- Don't resort to excessive alcohol, tobacco or drug use, and don't self-medicate using prescription drugs.



Practical matters and reactions from others

Everyday life changes when you're in self-isolation, and you might also be faced with unpleasant reactions from others. Here's a few things to keep in mind:

Buying groceries

It's important to maintain a healthy diet while self-isolating, which means other people – your roommates, friends, family or neighbours – must do your grocery shopping. If you need any medicines, you must also arrange to have these collected from the pharmacy by someone else. If you have not tested positive yourself but are in quarantine as a precaution, you may still briefly leave the house to buy groceries, but be sure to keep your distance from others and avoid physical contact.

Pets

It might be difficult to care for your pets while self-isolating – you can no longer go outside to walk your dog, for instance. Visit the National Institute for Public Health's (RIVM) or the Dutch government's website for the latest advice and guidelines for pet owners.

Reactions from others

If you have tested positive for coronavirus or if you are awaiting your test results, you (as well as your friends and family) may be faced with unpleasant reactions from others, either while out in public or on social media. This can also happen when you go out in public again after you've made a full recovery.

Bear in mind that other people's reactions might be motivated by fear and ignorance. If you feel the need to address these reactions, stay calm and explain that you're observing the guidelines of the RIVM and the Municipal Health Department (GGD).

Up-to-date information and advice

Follow the advice of the RIVM, the government and the GGD. For up-to-date information and frequently



asked questions about the novel coronavirus, visit the RIVM's website or the Dutch government's coronavirus page. Find more information about how to deal with the possible psychological and social effects of the coronavirus and measures on the IVC website (Centre for Information and Reference on Mental Health), see Contact.

Footnote cover

[1] This leaflet is for people who are in self-isolation or home quarantine. Self-isolation is when you seclude yourself from others because you have tested positive for coronavirus. Home quarantine is when you seclude yourself from others because you may have been infected with coronavirus. The advice in this leaflet applies to both of these groups.

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Sources

The information in this leaflet is based on/taken from:

Hong Kong Red Cross, "Psychological Coping during Disease Outbreak – People who are being quarantined". February 2020. IASC MHPSS Reference Group, "Briefing note on addressing mental health and psychosocial aspects of COVID-19 Outbreak Version 1.0". February 2020. International Federation of Red Cross, "Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Staff, Volunteers and Communities in an Outbreak of Novel Coronavirus". 2020. Information on the novel coronavirus from the Government of the Netherlands and the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment.