fseap Now we're talking.

Now We're Talking Tip Sheet

The Coronavirus Pandemic – Facts vs Fiction

Social media is a blessing and a curse. We live in an age of instant information where, in the blink of an eye, we are informed about what's happening locally and throughout the world.

Take the Coronavirus as an example. Once the virus was confirmed in China on December 31st, 2019, the world became aware of this new strain of virus through reports in the media (television, radio, email etc.) *and social media* in no time.

Word about this virus travelled fast. Social media sites lit up with stories and information from people concerned about health, worried they'll be the next victim, and afraid for their lives.

Some of what we learn on social media is true, and well, some not so much.

With this challenge in mind, FSEAP put together the FACTS from reputable sources – people who are in the know, who work on the front lines and who treat these kinds of conditions every day.

Here's what we learned:

- Watch this video for the latest, up to date information on the Virus: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eeh054-Hx1U
- For a full global report go here: https://www.who.int/
- The Coronavirus causes respiratory infections and flu-like symptoms. It was first detected in Hubei Province, China.
- For current information about the virus in British Columbia head here: http://www.bccdc.ca/about/news-stories/stories/2020/information-on-novel-coronavirus
- The Coronavirus is a member of a virus family, which can cause anything from a cold to SARS to other respiratory conditions.
- The spread of the virus was initially thought to be from animal to humans but we've since learned that it can be person to person, just like the cold and flu virus.
- China took the appropriate measures to control and contain the spread of the virus by quarantining and now other countries are following suit.

Symptoms:

- Illnesses associated with the new coronavirus, named 2019-nCOV, are similar to several respiratory illnesses and include fever, dry cough, sore throat, headache, runny nose, feeling unwell and pneumonia.
- Most cases are considered mild to moderate with a subset experiencing more severe illness with shortness of breath and difficulty breathing. Compromised health, the elderly (not the very young so far) are at higher risk than healthy individuals are.

Prevention and Treatment:

- Take similar precautions to those of the average flu. This is the time of year where we experience more colds and flus – the symptoms and treatment are similar for all viruses.
- Practice good hand hygiene – **frequently wash hands** well with plain soap for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing, sneezing and before preparing foods/eating or touching animals.
- Cough/sneeze into arm/elbow (rather than hands).
- Do not share food, drinks, utensils, etc.
- As much as possible, avoid interactions with people who are ill.

- If you feel worse than a cold should feel, contact your doctor.
- It's only necessary to wear a mask if you are ill or have a compromised immune system (ie. Cancer, AIDS, etc)
- It's recommended keeping your distance from the person beside you when out in public.

See this website for Do's and Don'ts: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public

Additional Important Information:

- If you have recently travelled to highly infected countries, and returned to BC and have developed symptoms, contact HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 to speak to a health care provider and/or call or visit your family physician.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada has implemented measures to detect and contain the infection. These measures include: a) messaging on arrivals screens at international airports reminding travelers to inform a border service officer if they are experiencing flu-like symptoms and are arriving from an affected area, and b) an additional health screening question at electronic kiosks. Canadians travelling from infected areas to Canada may be quarantined for a couple of weeks.
- The risk to us in BC and throughout Canada is currently low and The BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) and provincial and federal authorities are monitoring the situation closely.

How to manage anxiety and stress. It's understandable that you might be feeling anxious and stressed about this global and local disease. After all, many of us never imagined that it could really happen here, in our own back yard. However, feeling anxious and stressed won't change the outcome or reality or this situation. And, because anxiety and stress weakens the immune system, you actually put yourself at additional risk should you come in contact with the virus.

So, here's what to do to weaken your anxiety and stress instead of your immune system:

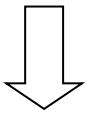
1. Unplug from news and social media sites: While it is important to be informed, news and social media may increase your anxiety and stress symptoms. Watch or listen to trusted news and social media sites ONLY, such as those in this tip sheet.
2. Try listening to soothing music or a mindfulness app such as Simply Being to calm your body and mind. https://apps.apple.com/us/app/simply-being-guided-meditation-for-relaxation-presence/id347418999
3. Stay well by exercising, eating a healthy diet, and getting enough sleep.
4. Wash your hands and cough into your elbow. **This is probably the most important thing you can do to protect yourself and others.**
5. Don't allow other's stress and anxiety to impact you. Breathe! Knowing the facts, being prepared for possible disruption at work or at school, staying healthy and continuing to live your life, are all good things to do.
6. Get some help if you find your anxiety or stress spiraling out of control. Your EAP is there to help so you can be aware but not stressed and calm instead of panicked. Your mental health is important – don't wait to get the support you need.

Please be aware of Coronavirus Fake News. Suggestions to drink bleach as a cure, blaming a group of people (in this case the Chinese) for the outbreak, buying into a conspiracy theory, and much more are lurking on social media sites, ready to fill your minds with untruths.

See this site for Myth Busters: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters

Be informed with information that is *real*. Only accept information that has been

checked and confirmed by the sources that know.



- The BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-%28novel%29
- The Public Health Agency of Canada https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html
- Canadian Government https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases.html
- National Collaborating Centre for Infectious Diseases https://nccid.ca/
- https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

If you are reading posts on facebook, twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and others, make sure the FACTS are just that, FACTS!

If you're feeling anxious and would like to speak to someone call
FSEAP 1-800-667-0993