

COPING WITH STRESS

- Take breaks, eat, hydrate
- Leave at the end of your shift
- Keep up your normal routine at home
- Sleep, eat, drink in moderation
- Know where your body holds stress and what works best for you to release it
- Spend time with loved ones
- Do what calms and nourishes you
- Control the TV you watch– don't overload on flu reports
- Talk with your co-workers about your experiences; get and give support to one another
- Try to maintain your sense of humor
- Draw strength from faith, family, and friends
- Ask for help if you need it

Material adapted from: "A Guide to Managing Stress in Crisis Response Professions", U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, SAMHSA, Center for Mental Health Services, 2005.



NYS Office of Mental Health
44 Holland Ave.
Albany, NY 12229

SELF-CARE TIPS FOR HEALTHCARE RESPONDERS DURING THE PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

**New York
State
Office of
Mental
Health**



Self-Care Tips for Healthcare Responders During the Pandemic Influenza

You are unique in that in the normal course of your work you are repeatedly exposed to extraordinarily stressful events. This places you at a higher-than-normal risk for developing stress reactions. Should the pandemic flu occur in New York State, you will experience far greater stress. You need to become fully informed about the impact that such an event may have on you personally and learn how to protect yourself from the emotional toll this event may have on you.

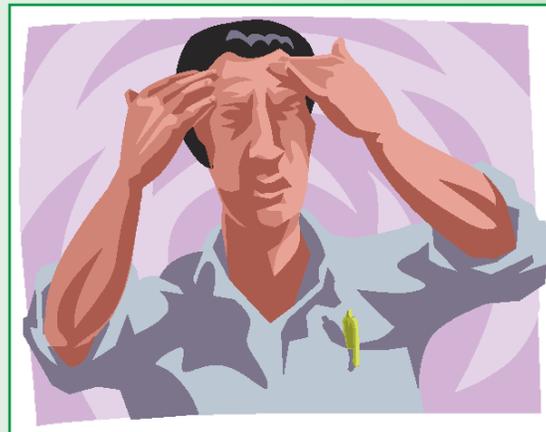
UNDERSTANDING THE STRESS CYCLE

Stress elevates arousal or readiness. With manageable levels, stress can help sharpen your attention and help you cope with threatening situations. When stress arousal reaches maximum effect, however the gain in performance is lost and your performance and health begins to deteriorate. Should your stress response be active for a long period of time, it can damage the cardiovascular, immune and nervous systems. people develop patterns of response to stress that are as varied as individuals.

Most people are resilient and experience mild or transient psychological reactions that are short-lived. *The stress response becomes a problem when you cannot turn it off; it lasts too long; or it interferes with your daily life.* The following list of common reactions is offered to help you monitor your stress level during the pandemic flu response.

NORMAL REACTIONS TO A PROLONGED DISASTER RESPONSE

- You may not want to leave the scene when the work is finished— regardless of whether your replacement has arrived
- You will likely try to override stress and fatigue with dedication and commitment
- You may deny the need for rest and recovery time
- You will not be untouched by the enormous gravity of the situation and may experience sadness, grief and/or anger



REACTIONS TO BE MONITORED

Physical

- Gastrointestinal problems
- Headaches, other aches and pains
- Visual disturbance
- Weight loss or gain
- Sweating or chills
- Tremors or muscle twitching
- Being easily startled
- Chronic fatigue or sleep disturbances
- Immune system disorders

Psychological/Emotional

- Feeling heroic, euphoric, or vulnerable
- Denial
- Anxiety or fear
- Depression
- Guilt
- Apathy
- Grief

Thinking

- Memory problems
- Disorientation and confusion
- Slow thought processes; lack on concentration
- Difficulty setting priorities or making decisions
- Loss of objectivity

Social

- Isolation
- Blaming
- Difficulty in giving or accepting support or help
- Inability to experience pleasure or have fun