What to do and what not to do when there is an epidemic or a threat of an epidemic

When the coronavirus outbreak rapidly escalated to global pandemic status in the first half of 2020, we were faced (many of us, for the first time) with some difficult choices about how to safely and productively navigate our way through life during what was, for all intents and purposes, an emergency situation.

Pandemics, epidemics and disease outbreaks not only influence our physical and mental well-being, but they can also have an immediate and long-term impact on supplies, services, public infrastructure and health care systems.

Below are some tips to help you know what to DO and what NOT to do during such times, along with some resources that you can use to stay informed as best as possible.

✓ Do

- Plan ahead. Make sure that your whole family understands what is required to stay healthy, informed and connected.
- Collect relevant information from a trusted source, such as World Health Organization.
- Stay up to date and stay calm.
- Make sure that you have enough food, water and medical supplies (including prescriptions) to last for a few days in case you are unable to leave the house. It is an emergency kit of sorts.[*]
- Create a list of important phone numbers and contact details (family, friends, family doctor, schools, emergency services etc.)
- Be community minded. Check in (safely) on others who may need help. Resilient, connected communities are vital in a public health emergency.
- Take care of yourself. Try to get the appropriate amount of nutrition, exercise and rest.

⊘ Don't

- Panic

- Touch your face unless you have clean hands and have not touched common surfaces

- Engage in unnecessary social contact outside of your household

- Drink from someone else's drink or eat food that someone has already bitten into

- Believe every social media story/rumor/update

- Become addicted to the 24/7 news cycle

📋 Media information and exposure

The final 2 points are very important. As a crisis unfolds, you may rely heavily on media and social media outlets for up-to-date information.

However, such constant exposure to the distressing details of an emergency or crisis can have a damaging psychological effect. If the media outlets that you access are more prone to hyperbole and sensationalism, you run the risk of compounding your fears and concerns. Try to be aware of the media's potential impact on your mood and mental health.

😷 Get the facts

During a pandemic or epidemic of any kind, do not panic. Get the facts, plan and make good health choices. The World Health Organization (WHO) and your local department of health are two great resources.

⚙ Critical support when you need it
Visit optumwellbeing.com/criticalsupportcenter for additional critical support resources and information.

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