

# Dialysis Healthcare Heroes

## Staff Self-Care Tips During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As a health care professional, working through the COVID-19 pandemic can be overwhelming due to long work hours, high-pressure emergency response, changing guidelines, information overload, and constantly evolving new challenges.

Feeling stressed or overwhelmed during uncertain times is normal for anyone—let alone medical staff on the front lines of a pandemic.

Emotions in response to the current situation can include anxiety, anger, sadness, helplessness, and discouragement. Occasionally, one can even feel out of control.

In order to help you stay on track during these challenging times, below are some tips for your own self-care.

### Physical Health

- ★ Fuel your body by following a healthy, well-balanced diet and remember to drink plenty of water.
- ★ Aim to get seven to eight hours of sleep every night.
- ★ Exercise daily.
- ★ Stretch and take a deep breath often.
- ★ Avoid risky or destructive behaviors, such as abusing alcohol or drugs, excessive gambling or ignoring public health recommendations.
- ★ Spend time outside, such as going for a walk in a park, while practicing social distancing.

### Mental Health

- ★ Set and maintain a routine at home.
- ★ Listen to music or read books.
- ★ Focus on what you can control.
- ★ Focus on things to be grateful for each day.
- ★ Maintain social connections with your loved ones through phone calls or online communication. Consider a regular check-in schedule as something to look forward to.
- ★ Consume reliable news sources that report facts, and avoid media that sensationalizes emotions.
- ★ Limit your exposure to (or take a break from) news and social media if you find that it makes you anxious.

### Emotional Health

- ★ Lean on your personal beliefs and faith for support.
- ★ Look for ways to help your community, such as blood donations, checking on older people in your neighborhood, or donating to local charities.
- ★ Acknowledge and appreciate what others are doing to help you and your community.



See checklist on next page



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# Dialysis Healthcare Heroes (continued)

## Staff Self-Care Checklist During the COVID-19 Pandemic

### Even Superheroes Need Care!

While it may seem impossible to prioritize self-care in these challenging times, this is exactly when it's needed most. This checklist can remind you to make room for activities that can help you recharge and become more stress-resistant.

### Physical

- ✓ Remember to eat and stay hydrated. Regular meals help us stay strong and focused.
- ✓ Have a stash of healthy and energizing snacks, such as nuts, popcorn, or whole-grain crackers, easily accessible.
- ✓ Fit exercise in. It lowers stress and can help you sleep better. Even a short 15-minute walk can make a difference.
- ✓ Get outdoors. The fresh air and sunlight can renew both health and spirit, as well as help regulate sleep cycles.
- ✓ Fold exercise into daily activities, such as jogging when walking the dog or spending time with your kids on a bike ride.
- ✓ Don't let sleep be optional. Prioritize your rest between shifts so you can feel energized when you return.
- ✓ Before bed, take a moment to write down or take a mental inventory of your worries; then set them aside for the night.
- ✓ Practice relaxation techniques such as progressive relaxation or mindful meditation to help you get to sleep.

### Mental/Emotional

- ✓ Stay informed, but avoid news overload. Notice the impact news stories have on you and limit accordingly.
- ✓ Take mental breaks during the day, focusing on things that are distracting, uplifting, or soothing.
- ✓ Notice signs that anxiety or stress is building. Recognize this as normal, but have management strategies ready.
- ✓ Find your motivation for prioritizing self-care, then use that as a daily reminder.
- ✓ Reaching out is a strength, not a weakness. Be open to emotional and practical support from others.
- ✓ Know that mental health professionals can help you problem-solve and find strategies to manage difficult feelings.
- ✓ Think about how you've coped with hard times before. Try to re-deploy the strengths and strategies that helped.
- ✓ Find one or more enjoyable ways to relax your mind and body. Give yourself permission to recharge.
- ✓ Find creative ways to stay connected with friends, family, loved ones, and supportive social media communities.
- ✓ Avoid turning to alcohol, drugs, or other unhealthy behaviors as coping mechanisms.



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