

COVID-19 and Your Well-being



As a CRNA, you face continued disruptions to your clinical practice and day-to-day life due to the uncertainty of the evolving Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Anesthesia patient care duties may be upended because of employment uncertainties or the pressure of working in overburdened anesthesia or critical care roles on the frontlines. Whatever the case may be, **we are here for you**. The AANA is advocating for appropriate PPE for safety from exposure for yourself and your families: curating clinical recommendations, guidelines, and resources; and providing resources to support your physical, mental, emotional, and financial well-being as invaluable professionals in this unprecedented pandemic.

Isolation/Stress/Anxiety/Fear

Aside from the risk of the COVID-19 virus, the stress from the pandemic's social distancing and personal/professional related anxiety is a challenge for everyone's mental, emotional, physical and cognitive well-being. While a certain level of stress may be positive, allowing one to increase performance and rise to the demands of a crisis, be aware to balance your patient care responsibilities with self-care. As vital healthcare professionals treating COVID-19 patients, you're more likely to be stressed. While everyone may respond differently, it's important to recognize some typical signs to seek healthy ways to cope. You can also anticipate stress is coming and preemptively practice behaviors to help mitigate. Whether you're isolated or actively working, reach out within your personal network of family, friends, colleagues, and members of your community and talk about how you're feeling and listen to each other.

Common signs of stress

BEHAVIOR CHANGES

- Blaming others for everything
- Outbursts of anger
- Crying frequently
- Trouble relaxing or sleeping
- Frequent arguing
- Unable to feel pleasure
- Difficulty giving or accepting help
- Increase in alcohol, tobacco, other drug use

BEHAVIOR CHANGES (CONT.)

- Increase in irritability, impatience
- Wanting to be alone most of the time
- Difficulty communicating or listening
- Increase/decrease in energy/activity levels
- Worrying excessively

EMOTIONAL/FEELINGS

- Anger at being exposed due to others' negligence or mismanagement
- Worry about being able to care for children or others in your care
- Anger over politics
- Caring too little/numbness
- Lack of efficacy
- Depersonalization
- Challenged by limitations in your daily routine and access to food/supplies
- Guilt over exposing others to the virus or not being able to help
- Anxious or fearful about health of yourself, loved ones, community and patients in your care
- Worry about finances and employment status now and in future
- Depression
- Overwhelmed by sadness
- Desire to use alcohol/drugs
- Resentment about restriction
- Boredom by lockdown limitations
- Uncertainty/frustration about how long this will last
- Concern about constantly changing and updating COVID-19 information, statistics, and guidance
- Revisiting past trauma/PTSD - intrusive distressing memories, flashbacks, nightmares, changes in thoughts and mood
- Concern over personal safety when delivering patient care
- Heroic, euphoric, invulnerable

PHYSICAL

- Easily startled
- Fatigue/exhaustion
- Headaches and other pains
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increase or loss of appetite
- Stomach aches or diarrhea
- Sweating or chills
- Tremors or muscle twitches

COGNITIVE/THINKING

- Confusion
- Trouble thinking clearly and concentrating
- Difficulty making decisions
- Brain fog

Ways to Relieve Stress

- Be aware of how you're feeling and what healthy coping techniques work to lessen your anxiety
- Stay up to date on COVID-19 news, but take breaks to limit watching or constant checking on the growing number of cases/deaths
- Rely only on credible accurate information - see [AANA.com/COVID-19](https://www.aana.com/COVID-19) for sources
- Keep things in perspective
- Take care of your body by eating healthy, exercising, and prioritizing sleep to reduce stress and reinforce your immune system
- Seek relaxation, unwind, have fun, and inject humor (especially after a difficult or long shift)
- Enjoy cooking, preparing and sharing meals within your safety circle
- Avoid overreliance on food, alcohol or other drugs
- Focus on what's good by starting a gratitude journal
- Create a personal schedule with time for self-care, family time, exercise, etc.
- Help others with their stress by listening to their concerns
- Share your healthcare knowledge about the disease and prevention techniques to inform and calm those in the general public
- Stay connected (virtually or using safe physical distancing)
- If in recovery, participate in online support groups to maintain sobriety
- Reach out to the elderly, who are at higher risk to be especially isolated, frightened, and short on supplies
- Anywhere you are, any time of day, use deep breaths or stretching
- Use social media to feel better, like jokes and memes; avoid fear mongering posts
- Pay attention to your body, feelings, and spirit - keep doing what works as well as seek out new pathways
- **ASK FOR HELP WHEN NEEDED**

Where to Find Support

Mental health professionals recommend seeking emotional support such as from peers or self-help groups. Your peers are colleagues in your workplace or CRNA or other healthcare friends, near and far. Talk about your COVID-19 feelings and fears, share reliable information and resources, and how you're finding balance in this stressful time. See *Conversation Tips to Help Support a Colleague* on [AANA.com/covidwellness](https://www.aana.com/covidwellness).

When to Seek Professional Help

When feelings or symptoms affect your ability to function, seek professional advice. Examples include counseling options through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if your workplace has one or asking your personal healthcare provider for recommendations. Tele-therapy options are expanding and more readily available. See *Talk With Someone* section on [AANA.com/covidwellness](https://www.aana.com/covidwellness).

- If you have a mental health condition, maintain your therapy and any prescription schedule and watch for effect of stress for adjustments when needed
- If thoughts turn to harming yourself, call American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's **HOTLINE: 800-273-TALK**. See also www.afsp.org/covid-19

[AANA.com/covidwellness](https://www.aana.com/covidwellness)

CONTINUALLY UPDATED . . .

- Free Wellness Services
- Physical Well-being
- Mental and Emotional Well-being
- Conversation Tips to Help Support a Colleague
- Talk with Someone
- Articles from the Frontlines
- Alcohol and Other Drugs/ Recovery Resources
- Financial/employment related stress

**PEER ASSISTANCE**

-HELPLINE-
(800) 654-5167

24/7 Confidential Live Support

If you or a CRNA/SRNA you know struggles with drugs or alcohol, help is available.



American Association of Nurse Anesthetists | 222 South Prospect Avenue | Park Ridge, Illinois 60068 | [AANA.com](https://www.aana.com)

REFERENCES

Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health, Tips for Social Distancing, Quarantine, And Isolation During an Infectious Disease Outbreak, SAMHSA
Coping with Stress during Infectious Disease outbreaks, SAMHSAww

Emergency Preparedness and Response, Taking Care of your Emotional Health, CDC
Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Stress and Coping