

# Managing Substance Use During the Coronavirus Pandemic

## Finding Support for Substance Use Concerns

With physical distancing and other changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, some people may find they are using alcohol or drugs in an attempt to relieve their negative emotions and stress. Others with a history of substance use concerns may be experiencing increased urges to use or uncomfortable symptoms of withdrawal. You are not alone, and support is available to help you manage during this time.

## HEALTHY WAYS TO COPE WITH CHALLENGES

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Here are some things you can do to increase your ability to cope with difficult situations and emotions, reduce cravings for alcohol or drugs, and enhance your mental health:

- Make a point of doing enjoyable activities that are still available to you, such as listening to music, reading books, and taking walks.
- Maintain social connections with supportive family members and friends. Use online and virtual resources including recovery communities.
- Identify behaviors that interfere with sleep and improve your sleep quality. Learn more about forming healthier sleep habits [here](#).
- Stay focused on maintaining a healthy diet and taking medications as prescribed. Consuming alcohol and other substances can reduce the effectiveness of medications, so pay attention to any increases in substance use that may be reducing the benefits of prescription drugs.

## TREATING OPIOID OVERDOSE

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VA's [Opioid Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution Program](#) provides information on opioid safety and how to identify an overdose. [Naloxone](#) is a lifesaving medication that can be used for opioid-related overdose, and it is available at many community pharmacies, from health departments, and free of charge for Veterans through VA.

## THINKING ABOUT MAKING A CHANGE?

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These resources can help you address substance use concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- [MyHealthVet](#) provides brief, confidential screenings to assess substance use concerns.
- [VetChange](#) is a free, online program for Veterans who are concerned about their drinking.
- [MakeTheConnection.net](#) connects Veterans with information, resources, and potential solutions to issues affecting their lives, including [substance use and recovery](#).
- [The National Institute on Drug Abuse COVID-19 webpage](#) provides information on recovery resources and general guidance related to the coronavirus and substance use.
- [Veterans Crisis Line](#) connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring VA responders. Call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, text to **838255**, or chat online to receive confidential crisis intervention and support.

## STAY CONNECTED

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Technology has made it possible for all of us to stay connected. Seek support from your family, friends, mentors, clergy members, and people you know who are having experiences like yours. As a Veteran, your resilience and strength can also assist others during these times.

## KEEP YOUR MENTAL HEALTH APPOINTMENTS

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### Learn ways to connect with VA providers:

- VA offers both [video and phone](#) telemental health options that do not require you to go to your closest facility in-person should you have a medical concern or need to follow specific physical distancing guidelines in your community.
- [Schedule or reschedule your appointment online](#). If you are requesting a new mental health appointment, please call your [local VA](#) and they will work to arrange an appointment for you. If you need same day access for mental health services, call your [local VA](#) to request this and you will be connected to care.

## STAY INFORMED, STAY ENGAGED

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### Stay engaged with VA information as it becomes available so you can continue to maintain your mental health:

- [VA's Novel Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) webpage](#) has the most current information and [VA's Coronavirus FAQs page](#) provides answers to many important questions.
- You can communicate with your care team, track your health information, and access your VA health records from your computer or mobile device with [My HealtheVet](#).
- [VA Video Connect](#) provides secure video visits with your VA care team from anywhere.
- [Mental Health Apps for Veterans](#) help Veterans manage feelings of stress and anxiety and also remain in contact with their VA care providers.
- [Healthy Sleep](#) at My HealtheVet provides guidance on getting the right amount of daily sleep.
- [VA's Mental Health Coronavirus Page](#) has information on maintaining your mental health and well-being during the COVID-19 outbreak.

