

COVID-19 Tips for Individuals with FASD

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Information about COVID-19 or coronavirus seems to be all over the news these days. The government is recommending that Canadians practice “social distancing measures”, which means that people should stay home and avoid contact with one another. Events have been cancelled, schools and daycares have been closed, and the daily routines in workplaces are changing. These changes can be really scary, confusing, frustrating, and/or overwhelming. Here are some tips to help you:

Protect yourself

There are a number of things that you can do to prevent yourself from getting the virus and transmitting it to other people.

- **Wash your hands:** Wash your hands carefully with soap and water for 20 seconds. You can also clean your hands using an alcohol-based disinfectant. You should wash your hands after:
 - coughing or sneezing;
 - when caring for people who are sick;
 - before, during, and after you prepare food;
 - before eating;
 - after using the washroom;
 - when your hands are visibly dirty; and
 - after handling animals or animal waste.
- **Avoid touching your face:** The virus can spread if you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth after touching a surface that may be infected (e.g., with the virus on it). Wash your hands frequently and limit the number of times that you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Frequently clean surfaces:** Depending on the environment, COVID-19 can stay on surfaces for up to several days. The virus can spread if you touch your nose, mouth, or eyes right after touching an infected surface. Disinfect, or clean, commonly touched items such as toys, phones, toilets, electronics, and door handles using household cleaners.
- **Catch your cough:** Cough and sneeze into your elbow or a tissue, not your hand. Throw out your tissue in the garbage immediately afterwards and wash your hands.
- **Practice social distancing:** Avoid contact with other individuals wherever possible to limit the spread of the virus. Maintain a space of at least six feet or more between yourself and others. Stay home whenever possible.
- **Don't share items:** Avoid sharing items that other individuals may have touched or used, like cups, utensils, toothbrushes, and towels.

Stick to your routine

Routines are really helpful for individuals with FASD, and all the cancellations and closures have probably disrupted your routine. Keep as many things from your old routine as possible, including the time you wake up, the time you eat dinner, and the time you go to bed. This routine will help you to keep up with good habits and to lessen some feelings of fear, confusion, or anxiety.

Avoid large events

The social distancing measures the government has put in place likely upset your daily schedule and caused many of your events and activities over the next few weeks to be cancelled. Make a list of the events that haven't been cancelled and decide whether you *have* to go to them or whether you can skip/cancel/postpone them. Avoid events where you have to be in close physical contact with a large number of people. Stay home whenever possible.

Talk to your boss

Many stores and restaurants are shutting down for the next few weeks, and some workplaces are recommending that their employees work from home. Call or email your employer to discuss whether or not your workplace will be closing over the next few weeks. Ask if they are putting any special measures in place to deal with COVID-19 and, if they are, ask your employer to have someone walk you through the new rules a few times to make sure you completely understand them.

Plan ahead

Make a list of the essential things that you would need if you were sick and had to stay home for two weeks. Include things that you can keep in the cupboard and freezer without going bad, like pasta, canned beans, tomato sauce, rice, frozen meals, etc. Break your list into "what I want" and "what I need" and only buy the things in the "what I need column". Ask a friend or family member to do your grocery shopping for you or with you.

Stay in contact with your local FASD organization

Get in touch with your local FASD organization over the phone or by email. Many organizations are closing their physical locations over the next few weeks to slow the spread of the virus, but they will still be available to talk via phone or email if you are in need of support.

Get the facts

If you want to learn more about COVID-19, make sure the places you go to get your information are reliable and truthful. The best place to get information on COVID-19 in Canada is the Government of Canada [website](#). You can also get information from your local health agency, your provincial or territorial government, and the [World Health Organization](#).

Don't buy "cures"

There is currently no cure for coronavirus or medicine that will protect you from catching coronavirus. Some people on the internet may lie to you by saying that their product can protect you from the virus. This is not true. You can protect yourself by washing your hands frequently and separating yourself from others.

Be a hero

Staying home when you don't think you are sick can be really hard and you can start to feel bored or frustrated. Health care professionals and scientists would not ask you to stay home if they didn't think it was important. By staying away from other people, you can slow the spread of coronavirus and be a hero for others!

Talk to someone

If you start to feel overwhelmed, anxious, fearful, depressed, or upset, there are a number of people you can talk to. Try contacting your friends and family members by text message, email, phone, or social media. If you are feeling extremely overwhelmed, are experiencing suicidal thoughts, or are turning to alcohol or drugs to cope with your emotions, take the time to call a professional. You can find a list of all the Canadian help lines [here](#).

1. Monitor your symptoms. If you start to feel unwell (i.e., if you have a runny nose or a mild headache) you should stay home.
2. If you get symptoms like a fever, a deep cough, and difficulty breathing, call your local health agency or helpline.
3. Tell your local helpline that you have a *neurodevelopmental disability* and you need help understanding what you should do. Not everyone will understand what FASD is or how it impacts you, so use the term "neurodevelopmental disability".
4. Listen to the advice from the local health line and write down what they say. They may tell you to:
 - Stay home and continue to watch your symptoms
 - Go to a hospital or emergency room to get treated
 - Wear a mask when you go out in public
5. Inform a trusted family member or friend of how you are feeling and what the people on the health line suggested you do.
6. Follow the steps that the local health line gave you.

