



SELF CARE HEALTH ADVISORY

December 18, 2017

Sonoma County and its residents have faced unprecedented trauma in the face of the recent October fires. The Sonoma County Department of Health Services wants to encourage our community to take care of themselves this holiday season by being attuned to the needs of our minds and bodies.

Managing Stress

Important Things To Know About Disasters and Other Traumatic Events:

Being involved in a disaster can affect you personally regardless of whether you were hurt or lost a loved one. You can be affected just by witnessing a disaster or other traumatic event. It is common to show signs of stress after exposure to a disaster or other traumatic event, and it is important to monitor your physical and emotional health.

Possible Reactions to a Disaster or Other Traumatic Event:

Try to identify your early warning signs of stress. Stress usually shows up in the four areas shown below, but everyone should check for any unusual stress responses after a disaster or other traumatic event. Below are some of the most common reactions.

You may feel emotionally:

- Anxious or fearful
- Overwhelmed by sadness
- Angry, especially if the event involved violence
- Guilty, even when you had no control over the traumatic event
- Heroic, like you can do anything
- Like you have too much energy or no energy at all
- Disconnected, not caring about anything or anyone
- Numb, unable to feel either joy or sadness

You May Have Physical Reactions, Such As:

- Having stomachaches or diarrhea
- Having headaches or other physical pains for no clear reason
- Eating too much or too little
- Sweating or having chills
- Getting tremors (shaking) or muscle twitches
- Being jumpy or easily startled

You May Have Behavioral Reactions Such As:

- Having trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, sleeping too much, or trouble relaxing
- Noticing an increase or decrease in your energy and activity levels
- Feeling sad or crying frequently
- Using alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs or even prescription medication in an attempt to reduce distressing feelings or to forget
- Having outbursts of anger, feeling really irritated and blaming other people for everything
- Having difficulty accepting help or helping others
- Wanting to be alone most of the time and isolating yourself

Adapted from SAMHSA's Tips for Survivors of A Disaster or Other Traumatic Event

When Your Stress Is Getting the Best of You

Know that distressing feelings about a disaster or traumatic event usually fade over time (2–4 weeks after the event) as you get back to routines—and especially if you have engaged in some ways to help yourself. Try to use some of these tips several times a week.

People can experience a wide range of emotions during and after a disaster or traumatic event. There's no right or wrong way to feel. However, it's important to find healthy ways to cope when these events happen. SAMHSA has assembled a number of coping tips for people who have experienced traumatic events and disasters.

www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/coping-tips

The **Disaster Distress Helpline** from the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** is a 24/7, 365-day-a-year, national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories. Stress, anxiety, and other depression-like symptoms are common reactions after a disaster. Call **1-800-985-5990** or text **TalkWithUs to 66746** to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

You May Experience Problems in Your Thinking:

- Having trouble remembering things
- Having trouble thinking clearly and concentrating
- Feeling confused
- Worrying a lot
- Having difficulty making decisions
- Having difficulty talking about what happened or listening to others

Practical Tips for Relieving Stress

- Talk with others
- Body movement
- Take deep breaths
- Listen to music
- Pay attention to your physical self
- Use known coping skills

The University of Buffalo's School of Social Work has created a "**Self-Care Starter Kit**" featuring self-assessments, planning guides, exercises and activities that will help you begin your journey towards self-care.

<https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/self-care-starter-kit.html>



Taking Care of Your Physical Health



Get your flu shot

Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine every season. Vaccination to prevent influenza is particularly important for people who are at high risk of serious complications from influenza including children younger than 5 years old, adults 65 years of age and older, and pregnant women.

Flu vaccine has important benefits. It can reduce flu illnesses, doctors' visits, and missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations.

Get your flu shot. For a flu shot clinic near you see <https://vaccinefinder.org/>

Staying Safe During the Holidays

During the holidays, home dinner parties, informal gatherings, and other celebrations are abundant and oftentimes, so is the alcohol. Those individuals who have been drinking aren't the best judges of their ability to drive.

You can help ensure that your guests enjoy themselves and get home safely

- If you plan to drink, limit your alcohol intake.
- Provide plenty of non-alcoholic beverages for guests who choose not to drink.
- Do not pressure guests to drink; if they do drink, don't rush to fill their empty glasses.
- Be aware of guests who are drinking; stop serving if you think they are intoxicated.
- Do not allow minors to drink alcohol.
- Always serve food.
- Keep in mind that beer and wine are just as intoxicating as hard liquor.
- Stop serving alcohol toward the end of the evening. Only time will sober a person up. Drinking strong coffee will not help.
- For your guests that drink, encourage the use of a ride-sharing application, call them a cab, arrange a ride with a sober guest, or allow them to sleep at your home.
- Remember, other drugs, including marijuana, especially when mixed with alcohol, impair driving.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/consumer/vaccinations.htm>