

COVID-19:

Treating ourselves and others with care and compassion



What you should know:

- The people of Kaiser Permanente have been working on confronting highly infectious diseases for years. Your skill, commitment, and resiliency set us apart, enabling us to continue providing excellent care for all our members and patients during stressful times like these.
- It is natural for you to feel confused, anxious, and fearful during this outbreak, particularly if you work closely with our members and patients. We understand your concerns and appreciate your commitment to caring for our members and patients. We also appreciate your care and compassion for one another as we deal with our individual concerns.
- The COVID-19 outbreak has also generated confusion, anxiety, and fear among members of the public, resulting in social stigma and discriminatory behaviors toward some people perceived to have been in contact with the coronavirus.
- How we treat others and communicate about COVID-19 is critical to effectively educate and care for our members, patients, communities, and one another, and avoid fueling fear and stigma.
- Misinformation about COVID-19 can contribute to stigma and may:
 - Drive people to hide the illness to avoid discrimination
 - Prevent people from seeking health care immediately
 - Discourage people from adopting healthy behaviors
- At Kaiser Permanente, we encourage open and honest discussion about COVID-19.

What you can do:

- Care for yourself and one another. To alleviate the anxiety and fear many of us are feeling, it is important to focus on building your resilience. Everyone experiences negative emotions and responds to stress in their own way. By building and strengthening resilience, you can learn to manage your feelings while using positive emotions to recover. You can build and support resilience by:
 - Creating a support system of people you trust
 - Helping others when you can, and letting others help you
 - Noticing how you react to hard situations, and thinking of new, positive approaches
 - Being self-compassionate; cut yourself some slack and know you're doing the best you can
 - Practicing some form of self-care every day; self-care is health care

It's also important to provide care and compassion for one another as we each deal with the situation in our own ways.

- **Get extra help if you need it.** Kaiser Permanente's [Employee Assistance Program](#) is a free and confidential resource that allows you to talk to a licensed counselor and get the support you need. Go to kp.org/eap and make an appointment with an EAP consultant near you.
- **Stay up to date about COVID-19.** Take the time to stay up to date on the latest information about how Kaiser Permanente is addressing the spread of this virus by visiting kp.org/coronavirus/employees.
- **Listen, show compassion, and be helpful.** If someone tells you they or someone they know suspects exposure to COVID-19, encourage them to call their health care provider. Show compassion and support. Aim to make all members, patients, and colleagues feel heard, understood, and accepted. Share the [steps for prevention](#).
- **Share facts and address myths.** Share accurate information with colleagues, family, and friends about how the coronavirus spreads. Correct any myths you might hear, while acknowledging that people's feelings and fears are very real, even if the underlying assumptions are false. Use simple, factual, nonblaming language. For example: Do say "People who have contracted COVID-19." Don't say "People who are infecting others/spreading the disease."
- **Speak up:** Tell your supervisor if you hear, see, or experience stigma or misinformation being conveyed, and encourage your colleagues to do the same. Seek out and share accurate information about COVID-19 and encourage others to do the same. Share official KP social media posts about COVID-19 with your social networks.

Sources: The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, UNICEF, and World Health Organization. [Social Stigma Associated with COVID-19—A guide to preventing and addressing social stigma](#) (2020)