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Hello,

As you are likely aware, COVID-19, the novel coronavirus that is spreading around the world – has recently been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization. As your EAP provider, we are writing to you today to share an important evolution in our pandemic plan, one designed to add an additional layer of protection against the spread of this virus for you and your family members accessing EAP counselling services through Homewood. We also want to provide you with answers to a few frequently asked questions surrounding COVID-19 and the impact on Homewood services.

Social distancing is a concept supported by health care and infectious disease clinicians as a key way to limit the spread of COVID-19. Over the next couple of weeks, we will begin to implement telephonic counselling services in place of face to face counselling in offices across the country. The research that has been conducted over the last decade or more is very clear – the efficacy of telephone-based counselling equals that of face to face. We have been delivering telephonic counselling for many years with solid results and high levels of client satisfaction.

In order to continue providing services to you, but to mitigate any possible health risks, if counselling is the appropriate service for you and/or your family members, you will be offered telephonic sessions until the spread of the COVID-19 virus is slowed and the guidance from trusted sources reverts to normal.

Additionally please find some answers to some COVID-19 related questions you may have, below. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Thank you,

Homewood Health

# Coronavirus (COVID-19) FAQ

## What is a pandemic as it relates to COVID-19?

According to the World Health Organization, a pandemic is declared when a new disease for which people do not have immunity spreads around the world beyond expectations. There is no threshold, such as a certain number of deaths or infections, or number of countries affected, that needs to be met in order for a virus or disease to be declared a pandemic.

## Am I at risk? What can I do?

The Public Health Agency of Canada has assessed the public health risk associated with COVID-19 as low for the general population in Canada but this could change rapidly. There is an increased risk of more severe outcomes for Canadians:

- aged 65 and over
- with compromised immune systems
- with underlying medical conditions

The risk to Canadian travellers abroad will vary depending on the destination, as well as the person's age and health status. There are some destinations where the Government of Canada recommends avoiding all travel or all non-essential travel. Check the latest travel health notices before travelling.

Canadians should continue to think ahead about the actions that they can take to stay healthy and prevent the spread of any illness, especially respiratory infections.<sup>1</sup>

Since respiratory viruses, such as the one that causes COVID-19, are spread through contact, change how you greet one another. Instead of a handshake, a kiss or a hug, a friendly wave or elbow bump is less likely to expose you to respiratory viruses.<sup>1</sup>

Practise frequent hand hygiene and coughing and sneezing etiquette. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, such as toys and door handles. These are the most important ways that you can protect yourself and your family from respiratory illness, including COVID-19.<sup>1</sup>

## What is social distancing? How does it help?

Social distancing measures are a way to minimize COVID-19 transmission in the community. This means minimizing close contact with others during the peak of an outbreak. We should plan for actions we can take if we need to reduce the spread of infection in places where we gather.<sup>2</sup> The virus can easily spread in dense places — in a packed subway car, for example, or at a rally or concert. Social distancing refers to measures that are taken to increase the physical space between people to slow the spread of the virus. Examples include working from home, school closures and the postponement or cancellation of mass gatherings, such as sporting events, conferences and other events like the South by Southwest music, technology and film conference.<sup>3</sup>

Social distancing helps to slow the transmission of the virus. This in turn lessens the burden on the Canadian healthcare system.

## Should I stay home from work?

If you're feeling ill, unwell or concerned, the best thing to do is speak to your manager, HR or occupational health and safety department within your organization. They're there to help.

### **I feel very stressed about all of this. Should I still reach out to Homewood Health?**

Absolutely. We are for you 24/7/365 and will help get you the tools, resources and/or support you're looking for.

### **What if I was already seeing a counsellor in-person or have an upcoming appointment? How will I know what to do next?**

You will be contacted shortly by the person you were seeing, or by Homewood Health, and we'll make the process really clear and simple for you so you understand how you will connect with the counsellor for your session.

#### **References:**

1. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>
2. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks.html>
3. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/science/coronavirus-terms-to-know.html>

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**Need more information or assistance? All calls are completely confidential.**

**1-800-663-1142 | TTY: 1-888-384-1152 | International (Call Collect): 604-689-1717  
Numéro sans frais - en français : 1-866-398-9505**

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