



 **assured**allies

The Upbeat

March 2021, Volume 2



Hello Spring!

To all our members,

Winter weather is still with us across much of the country, but Spring is in the air and we are all in anticipation of warmer weather, birds chirping, and nature awakening. Covid-19 remains a major presence in all our lives and thus, we thought we would dedicate this Spring edition of “The Upbeat” to some of the most pressing topics impacting older adults and their families - from vaccination to the power of remote communities to keeping your mind and body active to coping with anxiety and depression.

As we move into the warmer season offering us an opportunity to be more outside, continue to stay diligent about wearing a mask and keep your mind positive.

Be well and healthy.

Mark Friedman

VP Services & Operations, AssuredAllies

Honoring Your Emotional Well-Being

By: Marissa Badler, MSW, LICSW, CCM

Covid-19 has affected our society in many ways, including the emotional toll it has taken on people of all ages, who are feeling increasingly isolated, lonely, depressed, and anxious. Below, we will discuss symptoms to look out for and suggestions for taking care of your emotional-well-being.

Signs to look out for:

The most common symptoms of anxiety are chronic, exaggerated worry, tension, and irritability that appear to have no cause or are more intense than the situation warrants. Physical signs of anxiety include restlessness, trouble falling or staying asleep, headaches, trembling, twitching, muscle tension, or sweating.

Common symptoms of depression include persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” mood; feelings of hopelessness or pessimism; loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities; decreased energy or fatigue; Appetite and/or weight changes; and difficulty sleeping. These symptoms may be signs of depression if they last most of the day, nearly every day, for at least two weeks.

For more information about depression, anxiety, and emotional well-being contact the National Alliance on Mental Illness by visiting www.nami.org or calling **1-800-950-NAMI (6264)**.

How to take care of your emotional well-being:

- **Reach out for help.** If you are experiencing the symptoms listed above, you are not alone, and there are people who can help you. Reach out to your PCP’s office to find out how to connect with a mental health professional. You can also call SAMHSA’s (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) confidential, 24/7 National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357) for information and support. SAMHSA also has a Disaster Distress Hotline you can reach by calling or texting 1-800-985-5990.
- **Stay engaged.** Even though it may not be possible to see friends and family in person, there are other ways to stay in touch with them: phone calls, texting, email, video calls, and social media (like Facebook) can help us all stay in touch. You could also consider moving some of your previously in-person activities, such as a book group or regular coffee date, to be virtual through video conferencing platforms like Zoom. You could also have them outside if you are able to stay safely distanced and follow the CDC’s safety protocols, like wearing a mask.
- **Try healthy coping strategies.** Everyone deals with stress differently, but try some of these healthy ways to help you cope: participate in activities you enjoy, meditate, exercise, go outside, connect with faith-based or other community organizations, take a break from the news, or talk to friends or family about how you’re feeling.
- **Take care of your body.** Emotional and physical health are interconnected. Taking care of your physical health will also help improve your emotional well-being. Exercise, eat well, get enough sleep, keep up with your regular medical care, and avoid excessive drug and alcohol use.

6 FAQs About COVID-19 Vaccines

By: Katelynn Dornbusch, OTD, OTR/L

Throughout this past year, COVID-19 has spread around the world and taken a mental and physical toll on everyone. Thankfully, in record time and with great effort from scientists around the world, multiple vaccines for this deadly virus have been created and rigorously tested for safety and effectiveness.

Below you can find answers to some of the frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccines that are currently available in the United States:

What vaccines are available in the United States?

In the United States multiple vaccines have received emergency use authorization (EUA) to begin inoculating people against the virus that causes COVID-19. These vaccines both are mRNA vaccines, and have undergone rigorous clinical trials and intensive safety monitoring. If you want more information about the COVID-19 vaccines available in the US check out this webpage from the CDC at [go.assured.care/CDC-Vaccines-US](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz/downloads/p/2020-12-10-covid-19-vaccines-us.html)

What are mRNA Vaccines?

The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are both mRNA vaccines, a newer type of vaccine technology. Unlike some other vaccines that use weakened or inactivated viruses to help the body develop immunity, mRNA vaccines trigger an immune response and generate immunity by taking advantage of the process that cells use to make proteins. Although this is a new vaccine technology, it is important to note that this type of vaccine has been studied for more than a decade. If you want more information on mRNA vaccine technology check out this webpage from the CDC at [go.assured.care/CDC-mRNA-vaccines](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz/downloads/p/2020-12-10-covid-19-mrna-vaccines.html)

What happens when I get the vaccine?

The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are both administered intramuscularly through two injections in the upper arm (deltoid muscle) that are spaced out over several weeks. The time between injections depends on which of the two vaccines you receive. The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine requires two doses (injections) separated by 21 days and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine requires two doses (injections) separated by 28 days. After you receive each injection, you will be monitored for 15 mins (or more) to ensure that you do not experience any adverse events or reactions. Once you have been vaccinated, the CDC recommends that you continue to wear masks and practice social distancing to help slow the spread of COVID-19. For more information on what happens at vaccine appointments and after visit this CDC webpage at [go.assured.care/CDC-vaccine-appointments](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz/downloads/p/2020-12-10-covid-19-vaccine-appointments.html)



How much protection does the vaccine provide?

The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines both underwent rigorous clinical trials prior to being approved for EUA in the US. The data from these clinical trials suggest that both of the vaccines are highly effective at preventing COVID-19. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine had an efficacy of 95%, and the Moderna vaccine had an efficacy of 94.1%. However, it is still unknown if receiving a vaccine prevents a person from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19, and this is something that scientists are still seeking to better understand. At this time, the CDC recommends after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine people should continue to wear a mask and practice social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19. For more information on the vaccines and their effectiveness you can visit the CDC webpage at [go.assured.care/CDC-Vaccines-US](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz/downloads/#/COVID-19). To summarize, the vaccine protects the person receiving the vaccine not others.

When can I get a vaccine and how do I make an appointment?

Each state is responsible for developing and rolling out a plan for administering the vaccine to its citizens and communities. Many states are now offering the vaccine to older adults (65 + or 75+). To find out more about the vaccine plan in your state go to the cdc website at [go.assured.care/CDC-get-vaccinated](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz/downloads/#/COVID-19) and select your state from the drop down list. Many States also have vaccine hotlines you can call to find out more information, or you can always try calling your local health department to get more information about COVID-19 vaccines in your area.

How can I stay up to date on new vaccine information and COVID 19 guidelines?

You can find up to date information about COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccinations on the CDC website at [go.assured.care/CDC-COVID19-vaccine](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz/downloads/#/COVID-19). As always if you have any questions or concerns about your specific health needs and COVID-19 and/or COVID-19 vaccinations, we encourage you to discuss your concerns with your doctors and healthcare providers.

The Power Of Food & Connections

By: Sahra Pak, MS, RD

Although there is some COVID-19 relief in sight with the roll out of the vaccines, the reality is that most of us are still continuing to socially distance, minimizing or eliminating gatherings, wearing our masks, and washing our hands. However, there is power in connection and nourishment through food that can help with your daily routine and thwart off depression and stress.

There are numerous studies that show the benefits of social connection such as having “family meals.” **Time spent together over meals have shown to help family members maintain healthy weight, build self-esteem, improve communication and understanding of one another, as well as improve one’s mood.**

Family meals, or being socially connected were, of course, much easier before the pandemic. However, do you still call or connect with them through a video chat or video dinner during these challenging times? If you don’t, this may be something that can boost your mood and wellness. If you have kids, grandkids, try to connect with them in ways that you are able, especially around meal times. Cooking together through video chat, socializing during dinner even through a screen can bring you laughter and togetherness. If you don’t have any children or family members to connect with - then try your friends, neighbors, or local community groups that you may still be in touch with through calls or video chats.

You may also like to try incorporating foods that improve your mood during this time when you are having these “zoom dinners.” Those are foods like **walnuts, flax seeds (ground), chia seeds, leafy green vegetables, fatty fish like mackerel, salmon, sardines that contain omega-3s.** In addition, foods that contain tryptophan may help you feel better since tryptophan converts into serotonin - the “feel good” chemical. Foods that contain tryptophan include **sunflower seeds, soybeans, pumpkin seeds, mushrooms, broccoli, peas, cauliflower, and chocolate.** Yum!

Try a few tips in this section to boost and uplift your mood this month. Let us know how you feel afterwards!



Active Mind, Active Body

By: Angelina Portuense, Case manager

For the past year, we have all been subjected to restrictions on being able to go out, spend time in-person with friends and family, and take part in group activities. It is no secret that with a loss of socialization and stimulation a majority of us have developed feelings of isolation. To help offset these feelings we have gathered a list of activities you can do regardless of a pandemic. Note that a majority of these activities require internet access. You can also call your local Council on Aging to see what other activities may be available in your area.



Continue educating yourself

There are a handful of universities offering free lectures online so that you can continue to expand your education.

Academic Earth: www.academicearth.org

BBC Language: bbc.co.uk/languages/



Stay connected with the ones you love

Use video chat platforms on your smartphone or computer like the ones below to gain access to smiles and virtual hugs.

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/>

Google Meet: <https://meet.google.com/>



Talk with someone new or reconnect with an old friend

Since you may not be able to go out and socialize and thus make new friends, try one of these resources to help you connect or reconnect with others.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/>

Friendship Line: (24-hour toll-free) 800.971.0016



Stay busy

Keep your mind and body active with these stimulating games and exercises.

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP): <https://games.aarp.org/>

Silver Sneakers: <https://tools.silversneakers.com/>

We hope that these activities will keep you busy, engaged and stimulated as we face these challenging times.

EDITOR'S NOTE

We hope you enjoyed this edition of "The Upbeat". Feel free to share this newsletter with your friends, family and neighbors as well.

We welcome any feedback, comments, or questions you may have. Please reach out to us at newsletter@assuredallies.com. If you prefer to receive this newsletter in electronic format, contact us as well.