



## Seven Do's and Don'ts to Help Build Immunity and Resilience During the Pandemic

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According to the chair of the American Psychiatric Association Committee on Psychiatric Dimensions of Disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic is not a tornado, hurricane, or episode of mass violence. All of these events are distressing, but the pandemic is unique and people are experiencing it in different ways. Many people feel unsafe, uncertain, stressed, and this makes it more difficult to make plans for the future.

From June 20 – 24, 2020, according to a web-based study, 5,470 adults age 18 and older in the United States, were given questionnaires to survey and assess whether they had symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorders as well as a scale that surveyed trauma and stress disorder symptoms. They also were asked if they had increased substance use or thoughts of suicide as a way to cope with emotions related to the stress of the pandemic. 40.9% reported symptoms of at least one adverse mental health condition that included depression, anxiety, and increased use of substances. One out of four respondents reported trauma symptoms and stress related disorders to include posttraumatic stress disorder, adjustment disorder, and acute stress disorder related to the pandemic. The percentage of those who reported suicidal thoughts was higher among those people age 18-24, minority groups, essential workers, and unpaid adult caregivers. When compared to similar surveys conducted in 2019, the occurrence of anxiety symptoms was three times higher in 2020 and depression was four times higher. Collaborating researchers from several universities in Australia and the United States conducted this study.

Researchers point out that as the pandemic continues and disasters such as the financial crisis, social unrest, and people who had less access to resources before the pandemic, people will have more stress as these disasters collide. Friends, family, healthcare workers, first responders, and fellow Sumterites, there are things we can do to help get us through this crisis. Leaders must emerge, not just elected officials or high public offices, or anyone with an official title. Be the leader in your community or circle of friends. Here are seven “do’s and don’ts” to help us build immunity (the body’s ability to fight off bacteria and viruses) and resilience (the capacity to quickly recover from difficulties).

### Do's

1. Choose your words carefully and mindfully.
2. Model kindness and acknowledge the feelings that others have of what they are experiencing.
3. Wash your hands frequently and honor social distancing recommendations.
4. Wear a mask, keep your mask clean, wash it frequently and change disposable masks once they are soiled.
5. Eat a healthy diet to include balanced amounts of proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals.
6. Practice good sleep hygiene. Stress and depression are known to slow down and lower the immune system.
7. Exercise regularly. Try walking in the sun outdoors at least 30 minutes per day to reduce stress and improve the immune system's regulation.

### Don'ts

1. Do not stay indoors during quarantine or social distancing. Outdoor activities have taken a hit during the pandemic that has led to limited exposure to the sun. Frequent use of hand sanitizers and masks can allow you to step out of your home.
2. Do not smoke, vape, or consume tobacco products. Yes, this does include chewing tobacco and dipping snuff or smokeless tobacco products. Smoking is known to impair the immune system. Health experts have reported that smokers are at a high risk for COVID-19 infections. Now is the perfect time to quit. 1-800-SCQuitNow (call for free help quitting).
3. Do not go to work if you do not feel well. Give yourself time to recover completely.

4. Drink water, not alcohol. Being hydrated is essential for strong immunity, concentration and fighting fatigue. It also helps move mucus that restricts germs from spreading into healthy cells. Alcohol consumption can decrease immunity as the gut regulates how and if we digest and absorb nutrients from what we eat.
5. Do not avoid getting healthcare because of fear of going to medical offices or places for diagnostics. Continue preventive healthcare measures.
6. Do not skip your flu shot.
7. Do not spend your free time with excessive social media and 24/7 news. This can affect your sleep, increase stress, and raise cortisol levels that affect immunity.