

YOUR WORKPLACE GUIDE DURING COVID-19

Brought to you by The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center



A SAFE RETURN TO WORK

A guide for employees during COVID-19



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

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WHY WE CREATED THIS GUIDE

As businesses across the country reopen during the COVID-19 outbreak, there's a lot of information out there about preventing the spread of the disease. It's hard to know what advice to follow and which experts to trust.

This guide aims to cut through the noise and give you simple, proven and effective ways to keep you, your family and your co-workers safe.

At The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, we're deeply committed to improving lives around the globe through innovation in research, education and patient care. During extraordinary public health challenges such as COVID-19, it's our responsibility and our privilege to serve as a trusted resource for our community. That's why we've tapped into our depth of expertise in medicine, infectious diseases and patient safety, as well as that of the Ohio Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to bring you tips and recommendations for protecting yourself and those around you.

It might feel like a lot, but each layer of protection—from handwashing to masks to social distancing—strengthens the wall we're building against COVID-19. Remember, the steps you take aren't just helping you—they're showing how much you care about those around you, particularly relatives, friends and neighbors who may be more vulnerable to infection.

We can't fight COVID-19 alone, but together, we will move forward.

CONTRIBUTING EXPERTS

From The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center and Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute

Hal Paz, MD, MS

Executive Vice President and Chancellor for Health Affairs, The Ohio State University
Chief Executive Officer, Ohio State Wexner Medical Center

Frank Aucremanne, MS

Associate Vice President, Facilities

David Cohn, MD

Chief Medical Officer, Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute

Nora Colburn, MD

Medical Director, Clinical Epidemiology

Shandra Day, MD

Medical Director, Clinical Epidemiology

L. Arick Forrest, MD

Medical Director, Ambulatory Services

Anne Garcia, JD

Vice President for Legal and Compliance

Iahn Gonsenhauser, MD, MBA

Chief Quality and Patient Safety Officer

Amy Helder, MS

Administrative Director, Patient Experience

Patricia Hill-Callahan

Vice President of Medical and Health Sciences Advancement

Christina Liscynesky, MD

Medical Director, Clinical Epidemiology

Rama Mallampalli, MD

Chair, Department of Internal Medicine

David McQuaid, RPh, MBA

Chief Operating Officer

Alison Mincey, JD

Senior Associate Vice President, Human Resources

Peter Mohler, PhD

Chief Scientific Officer

Hal Mueller, MBA

Chief Supply Chain Officer

Beth NeCamp, MHI

Executive Director of Civic and Community Engagement

Timothy Pawlik, MD

Chair, Department of Surgery

Reginald Pryear, RN

Chief Nursing Officer, Ambulatory Services

Milisa Rizer, MD

Chief Clinical Information Officer

James Rocco, MD, PhD

Interim Dean, Ohio State College of Medicine

Elizabeth Seely, MHA, FACHE

Chief Administrative Officer, Hospital Division

Beth Steinberg, RN

Chief Nursing Officer, University Hospital, James Emergency Department and Critical Care Nursing

Rachit Thariani, MBA

Chief Population Health Officer

Andrew Thomas, MD, MBA, FACP

Chief Clinical Officer

Ken Yeager, PhD

Director, Stress, Trauma And Resilience (STAR)

ABOUT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

One of the nation's leading academic health centers, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center offers health care services in virtually every specialty and subspecialty in medicine. Thousands of patients come to us each month for treatments and services they can't find anywhere else. Providing access to health care information is central to our research, education and patient care mission.



Among our recognitions:

- *U.S. News & World Report* has recognized us in its list of America's "Best Hospitals" ranking, based on quality, outcomes and reputation, for 27 consecutive years.
- Eleven Ohio State specialties have been in the top 10% nationally, and we've received the highest possible rating for eight common procedures and conditions.
- We're one of only 64 members of a National Institutes of Health consortium that speeds the translation of scientific discovery into better patient care.
- We're nationally recognized for our commitment to inclusiveness and diversity as well as our information technology innovations and our efforts in creating sustainability programming.

At Ohio State Wexner Medical Center, we're dedicated to improving health in Ohio and across the world through innovation in research, education and patient care. This is our promise to our community and to people all across the globe.

CHANGES YOUR EMPLOYER MAY BE MAKING

Your employer should provide the following supplies to maintain a safe environment

- Tissues
- No-touch trash cans
- Hand soap
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer at main points of entry/exit or when hand soap and water is not available
- Disposable towels
- Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Disinfecting wipes, cleaners or sprays

When you go back to work, things won't feel the same. That's OK. To keep you safe, your employer is likely to require a number of measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect you, your co-workers and everyone you come in contact with.

Remember that each layer of protection fortifies the wall you're building against COVID-19, so don't take just one step. Take them all.



Employee screening

You may be asked to take your temperature at home, or you'll be screened for fever when you arrive at your workplace.



Handwashing

You've probably seen signs in workplace bathrooms reminding you to wash your hands thoroughly. Expect to see more. Handwashing is the first and most effective step in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

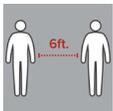
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Masks

You may be infected with COVID-19 and not know it. Masks help prevent those around you from getting sick. It may feel weird or inconvenient to wear one, but doing so is a simple act of kindness and care.



Social distancing

So long, water cooler conversations and group lunch breaks. Expect to see more distance between your desks and tape on the floor marking 6 feet of distance in gathering areas. Large meetings are likely to be virtual, and breaks may be staggered. Those who can work from home may remain there to slow the spread of COVID-19 and keep those at work safer.



Cleaning and disinfecting

The CDC's guidance to cleaning and disinfecting during COVID-19 calls for increased routine cleaning of surfaces and objects such as light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards and toilets. Expect to see more frequent cleaning, and pitch in where you can. Also, apply these cleaning standards to the items you touch all the time, such as your phone, earbuds or water bottles.



HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR CO-WORKERS

Handwashing and hand sanitizer

Hand hygiene is an easy and effective way to prevent the spread of infections. The best way to keep your hands clean is with soap and water, but when you can't get to a sink to wash your hands, hand sanitizer is a good second best.

When to wash your hands

From the CDC:

- **Before, during** and **after** preparing food
- **Before** eating food
- **Before** and **after** caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- **Before** and **after** treating a cut or wound
- **After** using the toilet
- **After** changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- **After** blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- **After** touching an animal, animal feed or animal waste
- **After** handling pet food or pet treats
- **After** touching garbage

During the COVID-19 pandemic, you should also clean hands:

- After you've been in a public place and touched an item or surface that may be frequently touched by other people. Think door handles, tables, gas pumps, shopping carts or electronic cash registers/screens, etc.
- Before touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Proper handwashing technique

1

Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), and apply soap.



2

Lather your hands with the soap, getting the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails.



3

Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. (Hum the "Happy Birthday" song to yourself twice through for a timer.)



4

Rinse hands well with clean, running water.



5

Dry hands with a clean towel, or air dry them.



Hand sanitizer

- Read the ingredients and make sure the sanitizer is alcohol-based. You'll want at least 60% alcohol, but ideally 70%.
- Use enough to adequately cover all the surfaces of your hands and between your fingers. The recommendation is a dollop the size of a quarter, but if you notice that your hands are dry and you haven't got good coverage, do it again.



Wearing a mask

Studies have shown that a significant portion of people with coronavirus lack symptoms and that even those who eventually develop symptoms can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms.

In other words, we can never be 100% certain that we don't have the virus. This is why wearing a mask is an important safety step we can take to protect others.

Because the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity—speaking, coughing or sneezing—the CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

The cloth face coverings recommended aren't surgical masks or N-95 respirators, which remain critical supplies that should be reserved for health care workers and other medical first responders. Here are directions for making your own cloth mask.

[**CLICK FOR DIRECTIONS**](#)

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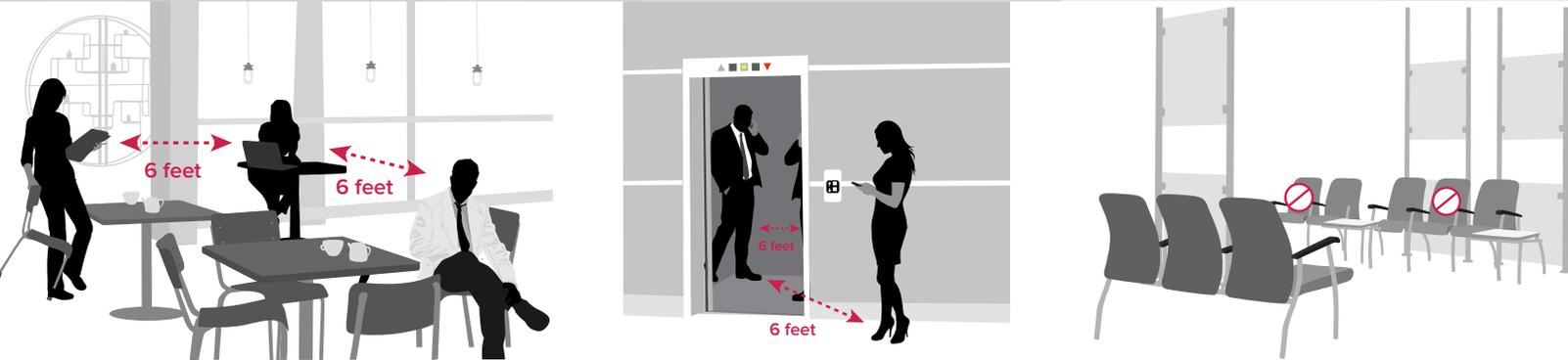


Putting on, removing and caring for your mask

- Wash your hands well before putting the mask on and after taking it off.
- Also wash your hands if you touch your mask to adjust it. Use soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Fit elastic bands behind your ears, or tie the top ties at the middle of your head and the bottom ties around the back of your neck. If applicable, pinch the wire at the top of the mask edge around the top of your nose to make a snug fit.
- Pull the bottom of the mask down over your chin. Be sure the mask covers your nose and mouth.
- Try to avoid touching the mask to prevent spreading germs to or from the mask.
- Before you remove your mask, wash your hands well.
- Remove the mask without touching the front of the mask.
- You can include your face covering with your regular laundry or wash by hand using a solution of 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) bleach per gallon of room temperature water. Soak for five minutes and rinse thoroughly. Allow to dry completely.

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SOCIAL DISTANCING

“Social distancing”—which is actually about the physical distance we keep between ourselves and others—keeps sick people from coming into contact with healthy people. During the COVID-19 pandemic, you should practice as much social distancing as possible in the workplace.

Create at least 6 feet of physical space between you and your co-workers and customers

- If your employer hasn't already, create space between your computers/work stations.
- Limit the sharing of work stations, and clean and disinfect between use.
- Don't gather in areas such as front desks, waiting rooms and break rooms.

Limit how many people you're around at any given time

- Work from home if and when possible.
- Schedule virtual meetings or events when social distancing guidelines can't be met.
- Stagger your breaks and meals with your co-workers.

Take additional safety precautions

- Always use lids on drinking cups and water bottles.
- Use disposable tableware and other materials during meals and breaks.
- Limit your use of public transportation, ridesharing or taxis, if possible. **If you must use public transportation**, make sure to follow handwashing guidelines, wear a face covering and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Now's the time to make regular cleaning and disinfecting part of your workday. Wipe down your work station using alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol at the beginning and end of your shift. If you share a station, be sure to clean and sanitize between each use.

HEALTHY HABITS

While this guide details precautions you should take during the time of COVID-19, there are many health practices you should be adopting now and always to stay healthy, prevent disease and promote well-being in the workplace.



Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when you sneeze or cough.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.



Stay home when you're sick.



Wash your hands often with soap and water.



Get adequate sleep.



Eat well-balanced meals.



Stay hydrated.



Do not smoke, vape or allow others to smoke or vape around you. If you need help

quitting, talk to your doctor about programs and medicines to help you quit.



Reach out to family, friends and neighbors to stay in touch and to get any help you may need.



Monitor your health.



Establish a patient relationship with a primary care physician.

Visit wexnermedical.osu.edu/primary-care or call 614-293-5123 to find a doctor and make an appointment.

IF YOU'RE SICK OR HAVE BEEN EXPOSED

Report to work only if you can confirm:

- ✓ No fever
- ✓ No symptoms
- ✓ No known exposure

Fever

Take your temperature with a thermometer prior to coming to work.

Symptoms of COVID-19



Fever



Body aches



Respiratory symptoms, such as dry cough or shortness of breath



Chills



Sore throat



Loss of taste or smell



Headache

COVID-19 symptoms may appear 2 – 14 days after exposure. Keep in mind, many people with COVID-19 have mild symptoms and are able to recover at home.

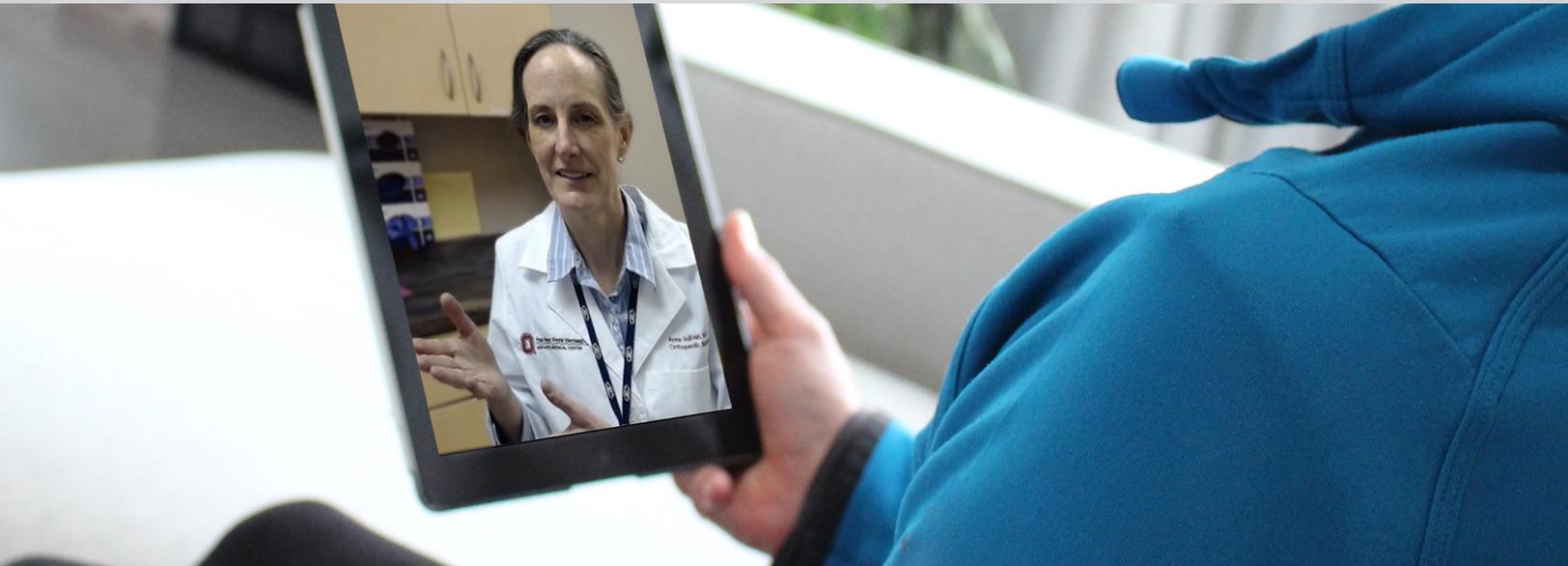
If you have a fever or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms:

- Stay home or go home to avoid spreading the virus to others.
- Contact your primary care physician.
- **If you don't have a primary care physician, call Ohio State Telehealth Immediate Care at 614-293-3200.**

[Download, print and share our quick reference guide to COVID-19 symptoms and exposure.](#)

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Known exposure

If you've been exposed to someone with COVID-19:

- Self-quarantine for 14 days (avoid contact with others)
- Practice strict cough etiquette (cover your cough or sneeze with your sleeve)
- Wash and/or sanitize your hands frequently
- Call your primary care provider if you experience symptoms

COVID-19 TESTING

Not everyone needs to be tested for COVID-19. Most people will have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care or testing. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and want to get tested, call your health care provider first. Your employer may develop a plan that calls for regular or surveillance testing at work.

Who should be tested?

You should get a test for COVID-19 if you're experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, have been exposed to a person who has COVID-19, or your doctor has recommended a test in advance of a procedure or surgery.

Where can you be tested?

Ohio State offers a variety of testing locations. To be tested, please contact your primary care provider. If you do not have a primary care provider, call 614-293-3200.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT TESTING](#)

What to do if you test positive for COVID-19

[READ MORE](#)

Don't return to work until:

- If you've been tested:
 - You have no fever without use of fever-reducing medications
 - Your cough and shortness of breath have improved
 - You have at least two consecutive negative COVID-19 lab tests conducted at least 24 hours apart
- If you haven't been tested:
 - At least three full days (72 hours) have passed since your recovery (no fever without use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in cough and shortness of breath)
 - At least 10 days have passed since the onset of your symptoms
- If at any time a doctor confirms the cause of a fever or other symptoms is not COVID-19 and approves your return to work, you can return

Visiting the doctor

If you're feeling unwell but are concerned about visiting a health care facility, you may consider a telehealth appointment. All it takes is a tablet, smartphone or computer.

At Ohio State, we're able to diagnose, treat and screen for a long list of medical conditions remotely, saving patients the time, expense and hassle of an in-person appointment. Doctors, including specialists, can perform many of the same tasks as they would for an in-person visit, including prescribing medication.

Our telehealth services boomed during the COVID-19 pandemic, with 98% of our providers holding more than 130,000 telehealth visits. Many patients have found comfort in receiving our care while never leaving home—a majority said they would recommend video visits to others.

Call to schedule a telehealth appointment: **614-366-5555**

[LEARN MORE](#)

Telehealth Immediate Care for same-day appointments: **614-293-3200**

[LEARN MORE](#)



STAYING HEALTHY AND MANAGING STRESS

Stress during COVID-19 is something to take seriously. It may cause:

- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Worsening of mental health conditions
- Increased use of **tobacco** and/or **alcohol and other substances**

Make sure to talk about how you're feeling and encourage your co-workers to do the same. Watch for symptoms of stress:

- Feeling irritation, anger or denial
- Feeling uncertain, nervous or anxious
- Lacking motivation
- Feeling tired, overwhelmed or burned out
- Feeling sad or depressed
- Trouble sleeping
- Trouble concentrating

Ohio State resources for managing COVID-19 stress

- **Coping with COVID-19**: Practical coping tips from the clinical staff of the **Stress, Trauma And Resilience (STAR) Program** of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health and Harding Hospital.
- **Reducing COVID-19 anxiety**: Evidence-based strategies and tips from Ohio State's chief wellness officer ranging from how to talk to your children about COVID-19 to staying well while working from home.
- **News and advice** from health care providers across Ohio State, including:
 - **How to cope with 'crisis fatigue'**
 - **Why feelings of grief and loss are normal during COVID-19**
 - **Why is COVID-19 making me so angry?**

Find help

When stress becomes too much, reach out for help. Find out if your employer offers an employee assistance program, or call or text one of the numbers below. In an emergency, call 911.

Find a local health care provider or treatment

- **Find a primary care provider or specialist.**
- ***Ohio State Behavioral Health***: 614-293-9600. For all in-person visits, you can feel confident that our locations are safe. We've taken significant measures to minimize the risk of the spread of COVID-19 and ensure that our patients are protected.
 - **Ohio State's Neurological Institute** is one of Columbus' top programs for psychiatry and behavioral health. We have over 200 medical, surgical and research specialists dedicated to the treatment of patients with neurological and psychiatric disorders. **Our Psychiatry and Behavioral Health Department** believes in treating the whole patient and addressing the connections between mental and physical health, giving each individual the support, care and respect they deserve.
- ***Telehealth***: 614-366-5555. For patients who cannot or prefer not to schedule an in-person visit. Accessible from a smartphone, tablet or computer.
- ***Telehealth Immediate Care***: 614-293-3200 or **schedule online**. Same-day care via video or telephone for patients 14 and older.

If you feel you or someone in your household may harm themselves or someone else:

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) and TTY 1-800-799-4889
- **The Online Lifeline Crisis Chat** is free and confidential. You'll be connected to a skilled, trained counselor in your area.
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline**: 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224

COPING TIPS

Remember to take it easy on yourself. This is hard. Right now, the duration of this pandemic is unknown, and there are many factors that will ultimately determine the path of this illness. Taking time for a deep breath is important. Working smarter—not harder—is key.

Be mindful

- Pause to clear your mind when you enter your work space.
- Slow your breathing. Taking several slow, deep breaths will help center you.
- Be aware of your body. If your stress is carried in your neck and shoulders, then stretch, roll your head to the left and to the right, and roll your shoulders, making circles with them.
- Do this several times throughout the day to build your energy and stamina.

Clear your head with mini breaks

- Work with your team to build in mini breaks throughout your shift. Even a 10-minute break can be helpful.
- Take a walk during the day or grab a healthy snack. Think about what's calming for you and improves vital energy and focus. This can work both in the home and in the workplace.
- If you can, plan downtime at home. Think of potential distraction activities that work well for you, whether that's a good book, movie, podcast, games with your family or mindfulness techniques. They all help us refuel physically and emotionally.

Stay healthy

- Maximize healthy eating by packing several small-plate workday meals, including fruit, nuts, cheese, yogurt and other energy snacks.
- Limit alcohol and any other mind-altering substances. While these may relax you in the short term, the long-term effects won't be as effective as eating right and practicing positive stress-reducing activities.

Keep moving

- Many experts say that moving for a minimum of 30 minutes per day is key to maintaining both physical and emotional wellness. The key is finding something that you can and will do. Some options:
 - Walking, biking, running and hiking
 - Playing a game of fetch with your pet
 - Stretching and yoga are excellent forms of movement

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Stay connected

- When you get home, interact with those in your household. Check in on your children's schoolwork and provide them with positive and supportive feedback. Schedule a family movie night. Be creative—there are many ways to connect with your loved ones and disconnect from the pressures of the workplace.
- Social distancing doesn't mean social isolation. Reach out to family, friends and colleagues to maintain social contact via FaceTime, Zoom, Skype or Google Hangouts to reduce your isolation.
- Consider joining another family or friend for a meal by social media to reduce isolation for everyone.

Think outside the box

We need to think differently about what we're prioritizing and how we can best meet the increased demand for care, social distancing and other unique stressors. It's time to think outside the box, especially when things are chaotic and are beginning to feel out of control. It's OK to ask for support, evaluate your needs and adjust your coping skills in a way that will help you to move forward.

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19 OR TO FIND A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER NEAR YOU.

**RETURN
TO WORK**

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[Subscribe to our e-newsletter](#) and get tips from Ohio State experts right to your inbox.

**DOWNLOAD THE OHIO
STATE MYHEALTH APP**

To find a provider:

wexnermedical.osu.edu/find-a-doctor

To schedule an appointment:

Call 614-293-8000

Telehealth: 614-366-5555

Telehealth Immediate Care (same-day appointments): 614-293-3200