

Managing Information

During COVID-19

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What You'll Learn

During a national emergency like COVID-19, news and information are essential to providing a sense of control, reducing uncertainty, and promoting safety in your facility. Yet too much has the potential to be damaging, causing anxiety among staff, patients, and caregivers. Finding just the right balance of what to share is important to avoiding overload. ***Find out the best way to manage messages to optimize value and minimize stress as the crisis continues to evolve.***



Information and Stress During COVID-19

The amount of COVID-19 content available these days can be overwhelming. And this is especially true when it comes to the long-term care industry, which has been the hardest hit during the pandemic. Typical sources of information *include*:

- News
- Social media
- Governmental agencies
- Health organizations
- Healthcare providers
- Individuals like friends and family

While timely and accurate information about the risk and severity of the virus among staff, patients, and caregivers is essential to promote the adoption of health

“While keeping informed about current events is important, too much attention can cause problems.

— Joseph F. McGuire, M.A., Ph.D., Johns Hopkins Medicine

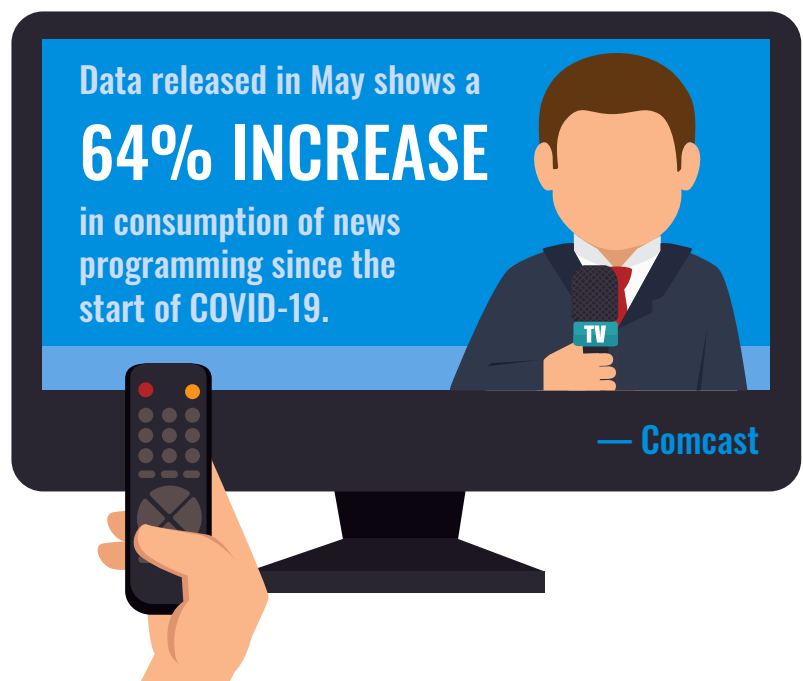
protective behaviors, a constant influx can do more harm than good.

Not only is the data ever-changing, making misinformation common,

but information overload can also impact an individual's well-being. In fact, excessive data can aggravate feelings of anxiety and heighten fears about the virus. That is why it is important for facilities to take steps to help reduce the impact of the steady stream of information.

A 2017 survey from the American Psychological Association found that 56% said following the news regularly causes them stress.

— Stress in America™ Survey



10 Ways to Manage Messages in Your Facility

With all the information circulating, how can your facility ensure it is promoting knowledge that will foster preparation and not panic? Here are some ways to help your facility and its stakeholders navigate the current environment and provide the critical information needed while cutting through the noise.

- **Promote Credible Sources:** When evaluating data, consider the source. Be aware of scams and fake news. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization and academia are examples of reliable content sources.

FACTCHECK.ORG, a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, monitors the factual accuracy of what is said by major US political players.

- **Follow Up with Action Steps:** If information is likely to provoke questions, be prepared with answers and actions such as updated policies and procedures.
- **Stay Up to Date:** Things are changing fast during the pandemic, and a lot of preliminary findings are later debunked. Be sure to check the date of the information you are relying on and avoid sources more than a few days old.
- **Restrict Communication to Valuable Information:** Moderate what you expose your staff, patients, and caregivers to. Avoid sharing content for content sake such as news stories that provide little new information or are filled with speculation.





- **Provide Context:** When you share information, add some context about where it came from and why you are sharing it so readers understand the relevance.

- **Give People What They Need:** Everyone does not need to hear every message so make sure you understand your audiences' evolving information needs during a crisis and filter what you share accordingly.

- **Avoid Sensationalizing:** Before you spread information, consider whether it is helpful to staff and patients or will just feed their anxiety.

- **Share Good News, Too:** Uplifting stories or anecdotes can help lift the spirits of those in your facility during this difficult time.

- **Centralize Communications:** Have a dedicated, centralized place to house "COVID-19 related information" such as an internal or external website with each entry timestamped so that readers can quickly find the most recent information.

- **Promote Self-Care:** Encourage staff and patients to limit screen time and avoid media over-exposure and instead focus on activities that make them feel good.

The need for facilities to stay informed during the pandemic is essential, but so is preventing the real threat of overexposure. With these steps, your facility can help make informed decisions about what to share and when.



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