

The image features a background photograph of a person in a white lab coat holding a teal surgical mask. The top of the image has a blue diagonal banner with the PharMerica logo and name. Two text boxes, one orange and one blue, are overlaid on the lower half of the image. The bottom of the image has an orange diagonal banner.

PharMerica

Preserving Resident Well-Being

During COVID-19

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What You'll Learn

Skilled Nursing Facilities work to provide comfortable settings for aging seniors. But even in these safe, comforting environments, patients are not spared the effects of COVID-19, even within their own walls. The high rates of infection, visitation restrictions, and limits to their independence have affected everyone. During this chaotic time, facilities need to focus on what they do best: taking care of patients. And that means their emotional health as well. **Find out top ways you can protect the well-being of patients during COVID-19 to help them live their best lives no matter the circumstances.**

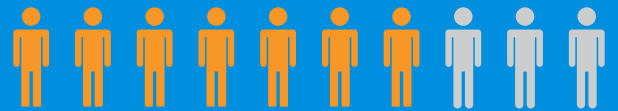


COVID-19 and Senior Stress

The evolving COVID-19 health crisis has affected everyone. Yet those in skilled nursing facilities are among the groups most vulnerable to the virus because of their age and underlying health conditions. To reassure residents and their families, strict protocols and other measures have been implemented to protect their health. Yet preserving these seniors' emotional well-being is also essential.

According to the CDC, people who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. And it may affect them in a variety of ways. The CDC cites that stress during an **infectious disease outbreak can include:**

- Fear and worry about their own health and the health of their loved ones
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Worsening chronic health problems or mental health conditions
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs



8 out of 10 deaths
reported in the US have been in adults
65 years old and older. — CDC



Additional signs and symptoms of stress can include muscle tension, headaches, upset stomach, indigestion or acid reflux, and irritability, among others. Left untreated, all of these factors can cause added issues for a vulnerable population already at risk.

How Your Community Can Support Resident Well-Being

While not all stress is bad and, in fact, can be essential for survival, prolonged stress can be harmful, contributing to serious health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and other illnesses. In addition, it can put seniors at a greater risk of depression. To help residents manage the uncertainty and anxiety surrounding the pandemic, communities can offer simple ways to reduce stressors.

- Recommend residents take breaks from watching or reading news stories about the pandemic since the constant headlines can make people more anxious. And encourage them to seek information from credible sources like the CDC.

- Provide ample opportunities for residents to take part in regular exercise, which increases the body's production of endorphins and boosts moods. They can walk outside safely by maintaining an adequate social distance or take part in online exercise classes from their rooms.

- Offer healthy, well-balanced meals and snacks during the pandemic and encourage residents to stick to their normal eating routine.

- Suggest that your staff help residents keep a positive attitude about the things they can control and to share stories of resilience from their lives with each other and their loved ones to spread feelings of hope.

- Provide opportunities for meditation or yoga through programming on your community's TV channel. Or recommend residents try out apps like Headspace, which is offering some free meditations right now in a collection called Weathering the Storm that focus on meditation, sleep and movement exercises.





- Remind residents to pay attention to their own behaviors and to talk to their healthcare provider or mental health professional via phone or telemedicine if they are struggling and feel overwhelmed.

- While usual activity calendars have been upended, get creative in your offerings to residents continue to have a way to unwind. Deliver items like art supplies to their rooms so they can pursue their hobbies or schedule organized singing or dancing sessions in the hallways.

- Suggest to residents and family that they connect regularly with friends and loved ones they can't see in person right now using technology like FaceTime, Skype or Zoom, and offer help to those who need it.

- Encourage levity in your community. Suggest residents share daily jokes, arrange for strolling musicians outside that residents can enjoy from their rooms or air funny movies on your in-house station.

- Tell seniors they are not alone. In this challenging time, everyone is experiencing a range of emotions, and sometimes it can help just to vent. Suggest they share their feelings with their friends, families and other loves ones who can listen and validate what they're going through.



Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has broadened access to Medicare telehealth services so that beneficiaries can receive a **wider range of services from their doctors without having to travel to a healthcare facility.**

— CMS

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