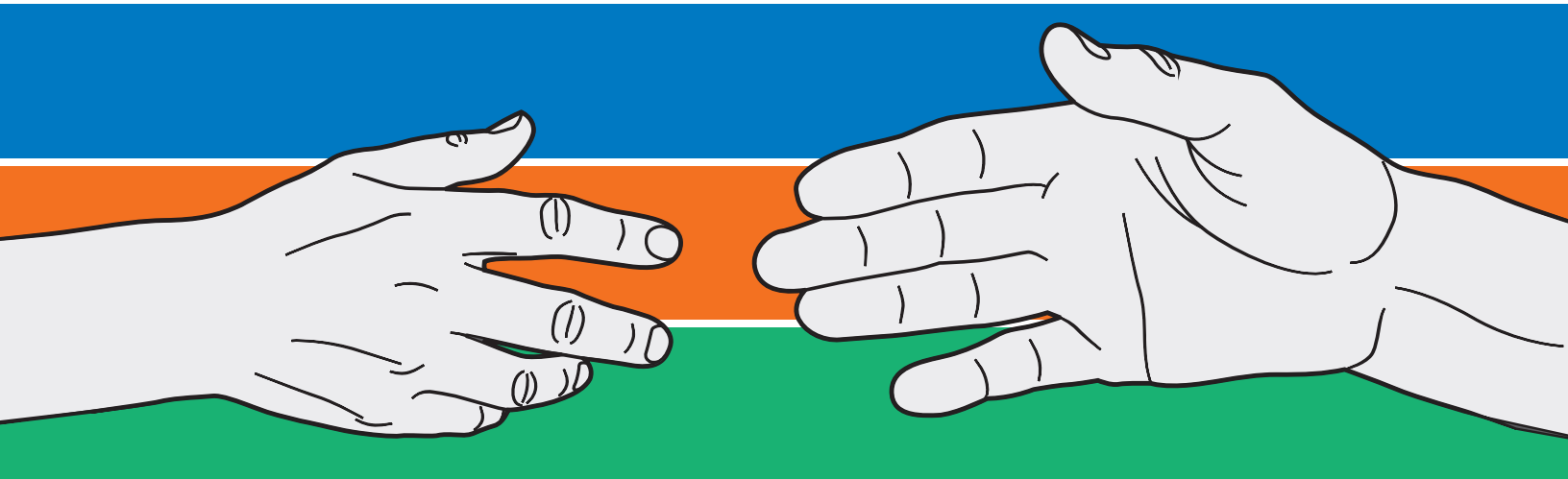


# SUPPORT FOR ALBERTANS AFFECTED BY WILDFIRE

Help in a stressful time.



# YOU ARE NOT ALONE

There are resources available to help you and your loved ones cope with stress in difficult times. We're here to help.

## *It's normal to feel stress.*

This is a difficult time for thousands of Albertans directly or indirectly affected by the wildfires.

When you are stressed, your body responds as though you are in danger. It makes hormones that speed up your heart, makes you breathe faster and gives you a burst of energy. However, this reaction can leave you feeling physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted over time.

Everyone who goes through a traumatic event is affected in some way. While you are coping with a disaster or emergency, it is normal to have symptoms of stress. For some people, the signs of stress may not appear until weeks or months after the event has happened.

Warning signs you may not be coping well include:

- Thinking about the disaster or traumatic event all the time.
- Having flashbacks to the event.
- A change in your sleep pattern (sleeping less or more; waking up through the night; having nightmares or not sleeping at all).
- Avoiding people or activities that you usually enjoy.
- Using alcohol or drugs more.
- Changes in appetite (eating more or less than usual).
- Feeling hopeless.
- Feeling more worried or frustrated more than usual.
- Having thoughts about harming yourself or suicide (call 911 if this occurs).**

### **FOR ADVICE AND INFORMATION:**

**CALL THE MENTAL HEALTH HELP LINE AT 1.877.303.2642**

**OR CALL HEALTH LINK ALBERTA AT 811**

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## Steps to *REACT* to stress

While you cannot control a stressful situation, you can control how you **REACT** to it.

**Remove yourself and your loved ones from danger.** Finding shelter, water, and food is the first step to coping. This can help you feel emotionally safe.

**Eat nutritious food and drink water.** Stay away from foods or drinks that have a lot of sugar or caffeine. These foods or drinks may give you a quick boost, but end up making you feel more stressed afterwards. Try to drink 250 ml (1 cup) of water every two hours during the day. Check that there are no boil water orders in place for your community at [www.ahs.ca/wildfire](http://www.ahs.ca/wildfire).

**Activity.** Find balance between activity and rest. Physical activity can help you feel calmer and cope better. Walking for 15 minutes makes the brain release chemicals that help calm you so that you cope better with stress. Get enough sleep. Too little sleep can make you feel overwhelmed, which makes it hard to cope. If you need to, take 15- to 45-minute naps during the day. Don't nap after 6 p.m. so you are tired at bedtime.

**Connect.** Find ways to help others when you can and accept help from others. You are not alone; helping each other builds community and hope.

**Talk.** Let friends and family know where you are and how you are doing. Talk to family, friends, or support workers about how you feel. Realizing that your feelings are a normal response to an unexpected event can help you in your recovery.

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## *Your child needs you more than ever*

All children and teens respond differently to a disaster or traumatic event. Help your child learn to cope with feelings like anger, fear, guilt, and helplessness, to strengthen your family's ability to cope with a traumatic event.

- Limit repeated or constant exposure to distressing pictures, TV, or radio reports.
- If your child watches or listens to reports about disasters or traumatic events, watch with him or her. Afterward, talk to your child about what he or she saw to help make sense of the events.
- Children need guidance, perspective, and reassurance during traumatic events.
- Help your child learn words to describe and talk about his or her feelings.
- Plan regular family meals and have each person share at least one positive thing that happened that day.
- Ask your child what makes him or her feel stressed. Teach your child to know what he or she can and can't change or control.
- Let your child express himself or herself. Listen to your child's feelings without judging.
- Let your child know that you will protect him or her from danger.
- Teach your child how to call for help and memorize emergency numbers.

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## *Take life one day at a time*

Focus on what needs to happen today. Decide what's important. It can be easier to cope if you break down big challenges into smaller, manageable steps.

- Make a list of what you need to do to keep you and your family safe and comfortable.
- Access supports for you and your family. You are not alone.
- Follow your routines as much as possible. Routines like mealtimes, bedtimes, and day-to-day activities can help you feel calm and in control.
- Find a reliable source for updates and information. Take regular breaks from listening to or watching news reports. Thinking and talking about the events too much can make you feel more stressed.
- Decide what can wait for tomorrow or later.
- Find out when to apply for relief funds.
- Make a list of key contacts and keep it with your to-do list.

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## *Important Phone Numbers*

### MENTAL HEALTH HELP LINE

Staffed 24/7 by health professionals, the Mental Health Help Line provides:

- Crisis intervention.
- Information on programs and services to help you manage stress and anxiety.
- Referral to other agencies where appropriate.

Call toll-free at 1-877-303-2642

### HEALTH LINK ALBERTA

Staffed 24/7 by health professionals, Health Link Alberta can refer callers to programs that can help you manage stress and anxiety, including community programs not affiliated with Alberta Health Services.

Call toll-free at 811

*If you are having thoughts about harming yourself or suicide, please seek medical attention immediately, or call 911.*

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## Other Contacts

### POISON & DRUG INFORMATION SERVICE

1-800-332-1414

### ALBERTA GOVERNMENT EMERGENCY UPDATES

[www.alberta.ca/emergency.cfm](http://www.alberta.ca/emergency.cfm)

### ALBERTA SUPPORTS CONTACT CENTRE (Helping you find and apply for family and social supports)

1-866-644-5135

### HIGHWAY CONDITIONS AND CLOSURES

511

### RED CROSS (Evacuees and family members looking for evacuees)

1-888-350-6070

[www.redcross.ca](http://www.redcross.ca)

### ALBERTA EMERGENCY ALERTS

[www.emergencyalert.alberta.ca](http://www.emergencyalert.alberta.ca)

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**Call 911 if you are having thoughts about harming yourself or suicide.**

For non-emergency health advice, and information, call Health Link at  
1.866.408.5465 or visit [www.ahs.ca/wildfire](http://www.ahs.ca/wildfire)

## LOCAL NUMBERS: