



## ▶▶ Alleviating Fear and Anxiety During Essential Trips in Public

As the community combats the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), it can be anxiety-inducing to figure out how and when to leave your home to conduct crucial business – like getting groceries, picking up a prescription or going to work. Luckily, many grocery stores and other essential businesses now have efficient online ordering, delivery and curbside pickup. You can also ask your doctor to increase the amount of time between your prescription renewals. Despite these adjustments, you may find you still need to leave your home on certain occasions.

### Here are some precautionary measures that can help alleviate fear and anxiety when shopping in public:

- Wear a protective mask and – when appropriate – disposable or washable gloves.
- Maintain as much distance as you can from other shoppers.
- Before using a shopping cart or basket, wipe down the handles, or make sure cart and basket handles have been disinfected.
- Be efficient: Bring a list of items to purchase and keep conversations and contact with others to a minimum.
- Be gently aware of others around you. A smile and kind glance can be felt even through a face cover.
- Since the virus can spread from surface to surface, be cautious of the surfaces you touch and wash your hands thoroughly when you get home.
- Only handle items you intend to purchase.
- Whenever possible, plan ahead to reduce the number of times you need to go to the store. And when you make the trip, buy enough food or supplies to last more than a couple of weeks.
- For medication pickups, ask your healthcare provider about getting a 90-day prescription instead of 60 or 30-day prescription. If available, use your pharmacy's delivery service or drive-thru options.
- Wash your hands, remove your shoes and change clothes.

Being out in public during the COVID-19 outbreak can be mentally taxing; find ways to relax and take your mind off of stressors by doing activities you enjoy.

Similar to running errands in public, going to work during the pandemic can be wearing on your mental health as well. Spaces we previously found reassuring and comforting can seem dangerous and uncomfortable. Be aware of mental fatigue and take some time to be gentle to yourself and others. The same preliminary measures for shopping in public can be utilized to mitigate anxiety at work, such as keeping a safe distance from others, wearing protective gear and wiping down surfaces before and after use. One added adjustment at the work environment consists of our relationships with co-workers. It can be equally difficult feeling the absence of other co-workers as is adjusting to working in a new environment.

**Remember:** if you are feeling unsafe or uncomfortable at your place of work, speak to your supervisor. Together, you may come up with alternatives or practices to reduce the stress.

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**Help is available 24/7: If you or someone you know is having difficulty coping with the added stresses of COVID-19, call the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) Help Line at 1-800-854-7771 or text "LA" to 741741.**

### LACDMH is here to help if any of the following applies:

- You feel isolated, anxious, fearful and/or depressed, and your symptoms worsen or become unmanageable.
- You find yourself having severe depressive thoughts due to fear and/or isolation, and you are afraid you might, intentionally or unintentionally, harm yourself or someone else.
- You are in a relationship where there is domestic violence that risks your safety and well-being and/or that of the children in your home.
- Someone you know is being harmed or neglected.