



Are you worried about the water, soil, or air in your community?

You can take steps to manage stress and work toward positive change.

If you've learned that your community's water, soil, or air may not be safe (for example, because of chemicals from a nearby factory), you may be facing difficult questions like:

- Is my health at risk?
- How can I protect myself and my loved ones?
- Is it safe to stay in my home?
- Where can I get reliable information about what's happening?

It's hard to wait for answers, especially if you don't know who to trust. And people may not agree about how to handle the situation, even among family and friends. When you're dealing with these complex and frustrating issues, it's normal to feel stressed.

What is stress?

Stress is a common response to new, uncertain, or threatening situations. In a stressful situation, you may notice changes in how you think, feel, and act.

Everyone feels stressed sometimes. But over time, too much stress can harm your health. **You can take steps to manage your stress and deal with the situation.**

How can stress affect me?

Everyone feels and responds to stress differently. People who are going through difficult situations often notice these common signs of stress:

Constantly feeling worried or on edge. You may have trouble sleeping or suddenly have a lot more or less energy than usual. Or you might find yourself getting annoyed or even angry at everyday problems.

Having a hard time thinking clearly or remembering things. You may feel like your brain is in a fog.

Feeling tired or run down. You may also have headaches, muscle aches, or even stomach problems, like pain or diarrhea.

Drinking or using drugs more often. Some people may use alcohol or drugs to try to deal with stress.

What can I do if stress is a problem for me?



Take care of yourself.

This doesn't mean forgetting about the problem or pretending everything is okay. But taking steps to manage stress can help you cope and feel ready to act in support of your loved ones and community.

- **Take time for yourself.** To help your body deal with stress, try to get plenty of sleep, stay physically active, and keep doing things you enjoy.
- **Share your thoughts and feelings.** Your friends and neighbors may have similar frustrations and fears. Talking about it can help you feel like you're not alone.
- **Reach out to a professional.** If you're feeling overwhelmed, you may choose to talk to your doctor, a religious leader, or a counselor, therapist, or social worker.



Stay informed and take action.

There may be a lot of things you can't control. But there's also a lot you *can* do to learn about what's happening, stay safe, and work toward positive change.

- **Learn more about the problem.** You can reach out to your state or local health department, local universities, or community groups for information.
- **Join (or form) a community group.** In these groups, people work together to share the latest updates, learn how to stay safe, and make their voices heard. Some groups meet in person, while others use social media to stay connected.
- **Take steps to protect yourself and your neighbors.** If you learn about ways to avoid harmful chemicals in your community, like using a water filter or not eating vegetables grown in unsafe soil, be sure to take those steps — and help others do the same.



How do I find a counselor or therapist?

You can ask your doctor or health insurance plan for a referral or visit <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>.

If you need help right away, the Disaster Distress Helpline is available 24/7. Call or text **1-800-985-5990** to connect with a helpline counselor anytime.

Learn more about ATSDR at www.atsdr.cdc.gov.

The Disaster Distress Helpline is provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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