

## **Health Resources, Benefits and Wellness during Covid-19**

In the last couple of weeks we have fielded a number of questions around health benefits during COVID-19 and what resources are available to employers and employees during this time. There is a particular focus on mental health and how we can help a remote workforce stay mentally resilient .

We have put together information below to shine a light on current health resources. This will help you and your employees make the most of their benefits and hopefully stay healthy during this pandemic.

### **Paramedical Benefits:**

Many Paramedical services, such as acupuncturists, are not currently considered essential care at the moment. Some RMT's (for essential care), Chiropractic services, Physiotherapy are currently available. However, scheduling appointments is proving difficult and service providers are asked to do an in depth phone screen prior to the appointment to ensure that the request is for an essential service.

Many major benefit providers are editing their plans as individuals can not access a lot of the paramedical services. We recommend that your benefits administrator connect directly with your provider to discuss additional services or rebates.

### **Dental Services:**

On March 16, the College of Dental Surgeons of BC (CDSBC) strongly recommended that all elective and non-essential dental services be suspended to contain community spread of the

virus. On March 23, the Provincial Health Officer also confirmed that she issued a letter to all regulated health professionals outlining her expectations for their response in this acute phase of the pandemic. Together, these requirements mean that dentists are now only treating urgent dental emergencies in their offices.

### **Employee assistance Helplines:**

If you or one of your employees is struggling during this time, remember that most benefit plans have access to the Employee Assistance Helpline. This resource is so valuable. It can connect your employees to the support they need immediately.

### **Seeing a doctor:**

You can call 811, the nurses line for over the phone help. Doctors are still seeing patients. Some are offering either phone appointments or telehealth appointments. You can also create an appointment with a Virtual Doctor through [Virtual Health](#).

### **Accessing a Pharmacy:**

Many insurance providers have decided to partner with companies like [Pocket Pills](#), that allows you to fill prescriptions online. Connect with your provider and find out if a) they have this or b) it is in the works. Pharmacies are open.

## Mental Health resources:

One of the major health concerns currently impacting the world, is that of our mental health, as we adjust to the pandemic way of living.

We have good days and bad days. There are services and tools out there that can help. Know the tools that are available to your employees, family and friends.

Below are a couple that have been recommended to us, and that we have personally liked:

Beacon Health – <https://www.mindbeacon.com/strongerminds> Stronger Minds by BEACON is a free digital program for all Canadians – to support your mental well-being through the COVID-19 crisis. With Stronger Minds, participants get day-to-day guidance from the extensive BEACON team of clinical psychologists. Through videos, quick reads and resilience-building activities, let's help you learn how to protect your mental well-being through these times.

This week the Government of Canada released their self assessment [tool](#), in alignment with the Canadian Mental Health Association. The government have increased funding to their [crisis lines](#) and they have released tips for Mental Health while working at home.

Are looking for more personal help? Here to Help BC provides some good guidance on if, when and how to start your journey to mental health wellness. They have a very easy to reference [fact sheet](#).

Do you know that you want to speak to someone and don't know where to start? You can use this [tool](#) to find a therapist. There is no shame in talking to someone. We all do!

[MindHealthBC](#) can help connect you to the person that is right for you! Don't forget your Employee Assistance Program.

## **PSA reminder below: Recommendations for taking care of your mental health:**

Get information from reliable and trusted sources such as [Canada.ca/coronavirus](https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus). Stay informed but follow news coverage about COVID-19 in moderation. (Remove social media platforms off your phone if it's too much!)

Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly. (See point above re Social Media!)

Take care of your body.

Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate.

Eat healthy, well-balanced meals. (Cookies count as cuddles if you too sometimes!) Exercise regularly, (walking to the fridge does not count!), Get plenty of sleep.

Make time to step back and consider how to take advantage of unexpected flexibility in your daily routine.

Stay connected. Talk to friends or family about your feelings and concerns. Maintain healthy relationships and respect other people's feelings and decisions.

Show support and empathy to those dealing with difficult situations.

Identify what is within your control and try to direct your energy towards what most worries you within your own control.

And my personal fav.... Cuddle your pets if you have them. (My goldfish isn't a fan of this.)

This is a big topic. BLANKSLATE will dive deeper into the individual areas in the COVID Blog Series. For more specific help, please feel free to reach out to [Izzie@blankslate.partners](mailto:Izzie@blankslate.partners) and we can connect you to the right support.

