

# Tips for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers

This fact sheet contains information and advice about coronavirus (COVID-19) specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers in New South Wales (NSW).

## Follow NSW Government guidelines

Official advice is changing constantly, so carers should refer to the [NSW Government website](#) for up to date information about what the current rules and recommendations are in NSW. It is important that carers observe official NSW Government guidelines to prevent transmission of the virus to themselves, those they care for, and the broader community.

- Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds
- Stay 1.5m away from other people whenever you can
- Get tested if you have the symptoms



If you develop a cough, sore throat, a temperature of 38°C or higher and shortness of breath seek medical advice. Healthdirect Australia has developed a [COVID-19 Symptom Checker](#), an online self-guided tool to help people find out if they need to seek medical help.

## Support is available

Carers NSW understands how important being connected to community is for Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) and NSW Health have developed a large range of resources, including videos and fact sheets, about COVID-19. NSW Health have also developed fact sheets to understand how current physical distancing rules impact on attending Sorry Business or other important mob gatherings. You can also always reach out to your local Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) for support.

There are restrictions in place which limit the number of people who can gather or attend funerals, so it is important to talk with your community about other ways to hold Sorry Business that will keep the community safe and help mob to stay connected. Some of these changes can be hard, so you can reach out to your local land council or AMS for support, call the NSW Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511 or call Lifeline 24/7 on 13 11 14.

If you require support to access food or other essential items, you can apply for the NSW Food Relief Program, or visit the Service NSW website to request an emergency relief package or food box. The National Centre for Indigenous Excellence are also making up Home Essentials Packs that can be delivered to your door or picked up from Redfern.

Telehealth is a way of accessing health services for you or the person you care for using video or telephone calls. Telehealth can be done almost anywhere, without having to go into your Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS). You will still need to make an appointment and Telehealth may be a significant change to how you usually access health services. You can speak with your AMS if you have any questions or concerns.

Carer specific supports are available through Carer Gateway. Contact 1800 422 737 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm) for information and support, or to be directed to a local Aboriginal service. The NDIS also provide regular updates which are available on their website.

## Stay well

- **Maintain a healthy diet:** A good diet will improve your physical health and give you strength and stamina. Eat a healthy, balanced diet and eat at regular times each day.
- **Try to find time to exercise:** Exercise eases both physical and mental stress. Remain physically active in a way that you enjoy (walking, yoga, stretching, or jogging). Remember to keep a good distance from people walking around you and wash or sanitise your hands when you return home. If you can't get out, explore the many free online workouts and classes.
- **Get a good night's sleep:** Avoid caffeine in the evening and explore ways to wind down before bed. Meditation, listening to music or reading can help if you have difficulty falling asleep. headspace offers a number of free programs to help you sleep and meditate.
- **Practise relaxation techniques:** Close your eyes and breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose and out through your mouth. Repeat ten times. This is a way of switching off, even if just for a few moments.
- **Make time for you:** Do something that you enjoy doing. It could be reading a book, spending time in the garden, cooking, meditating, listening to music or going for a walk. Taking time out to do an activity that you likes helps to recharge the batteries and allows you to better cope with stress.



## Stay connected

- **Explore the many free digital methods** for maintaining individual and group catch ups, such as video call platforms like [Zoom](#), [FaceTime](#) and [Facebook Messenger](#). Visit the [Carer Peer Connect](#) website to read more about the digital platforms available and how to use them. Call Carer Gateway on 1800 422 737 for support to access the Carer Gateway website and online information.
- **Call or text your loved ones regularly** on the phone for a yarn. Reach out when you need to talk, and schedule reminders to connect with those who may be feeling isolated or anxious.
- **Write a card or letter to someone** you care about. You can post it to them, or if they live near you, drop it in their letterbox while you exercise.
- **Create a gift** like a picture or a drawing, and share it with someone special.
- **Connect with other carers online** through the Carer Peer Connect [Carer Hangouts](#) or Carer Gateway [Carer Forums](#).
- **Reconnect with culture** by taking time to make an art piece, or share and learn dreamtime stories with community and mob.

## Keep your body and mind active

- **Structure your time:** Develop a daily or weekly routine that includes time for exercise, times to connect with friends and family, times for leisure activities that you enjoy, and times for undertaking jobs around the house.
- **Try something new:** Cook a dish you have never cooked before, start a new puzzle or book, learn a new skill, or reach out for support in a way you have not done before.
- **Record your experiences** of this challenging time in a journal or through creative activities.
- **Revisit good memories** by looking at old photo albums, sharing funny stories and taking up old hobbies.
- **Spend time outdoors** when you can do so, while still following hygiene and physical distancing guidelines.

