

# A message from Dr. Jonathan Rubens

Chief Medical Officer

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As we celebrated the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020, we couldn't have imagined how this year would unfold.

Words like pandemic and quarantine are part of our daily vocabulary. COVID-19 has laid bare the many inequities of our society. It has exposed the plight of the most economically and medically vulnerable among us. Frustration and anger over the very public killing of men and women of color are fueling a societal unrest unlike any we've recently experienced.

We're all learning to navigate this changing environment. We're physically distant, but not socially isolated. Technology is enabling us to remain connected and helping us to support one another. We're resigned yet vigilant. We're also resilient and strong.

That doesn't mean we couldn't use some support though. You may be an essential worker or working from home. You may be learning to homeschool or suddenly out of work. You may be trying, as we all are, to manage the barrage of disturbing images, voices and statistics and the emotions that these evoke. There's a lot of brand-new stress in our daily lives.

## Looking for ways to help

According to a recent poll, 45% of American adults say that daily worry and stress have taken a toll on their mental health.<sup>1</sup>

So, now more than ever, it's important to create a safe environment for people to admit that they're struggling and then connect them with support services that can help.

With the sudden arrival of the pandemic and the unprecedented amount of stress associated with these times, our clinical team began reaching out to our members. We wanted to let them know that we're here and prepared to help as needed.

<sup>1</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. Panchal N, Kamal R, Orgera K, et al. The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use. April 21, 2020. Available at <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/> Accessed May 19, 2020.

## Offering support

### Program support

- Our MyActiveHealth member engagement platform includes a wide variety of health information, including focus areas on stress management and sleep. We've also added some information that can help our members:
  - Add activity to their daily schedules
  - Adapt to altered work/life routines
  - Learn more about COVID-19, including videos and links to trusted sources of information, like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- It's been our long-standing practice to think of our members holistically. This means understanding behavioral health is key to well-being and including behavioral health training for our clinical teams.

Our nurses and coaches include questions designed to elicit information about stress, anxiety and depression in their interactions with members.

### Referrals

- As an integrated part of your population health solution, we do our best to be aware of the other programs you offer.

As such, we're poised to offer referrals to behavioral health support from your health insurance carrier, Employee Assistance Program or other vendor partners.

- Finally, we can identify and refer to both local and national supports including:
  - The [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) available at **800-273-8255**
  - The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) available at **800-985-5990**

### Looking ahead

Humans are social creatures. We've been embracing technology to recraft our social fabric. As summer nears though, we'll need to find ways to reengage in healthful activities.

We can still be active, and we can still go to the park or beach. We just need to be mindful about distancing to protect one another.

As we all begin to learn what our new home and working lives look like, and as our society tries to move forward to one that is more equitable and just, remember that we're here to support you and your employees. We're ready to work with you to address new and changing needs as they evolve.

### Stay up to date with the latest

ActiveHealth is part of the CVS Health® family of companies. Click [here](#) to read more about our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

You'll also find more information about our commitment to social responsibility.

Click [here](#) to read a message from Larry Merlo, CEO of CVS Health, about our commitment to inclusion and belonging.



To your health and well-being,

Jonathan S. Rubens, MD, MHPE, CHIE