

## Engage: Community resources

In this handout we have outlined resources to help you cope with your physical symptoms, as well as emotional and psychological experiences that you might experience while living with post-viral fatigue. The resources in this document are free to British Columbians, unless we have indicated otherwise.

These resources are organized into the following areas:

1. Emotional & psychological health
2. Food & nutrition
3. Self-management
4. Social supports



### BC 211

If you cannot find a service listed here or are looking for services in ASL or in another language, BC211 can help you connect with the appropriate health, community, or government service. This information and referral service is free, confidential, and offered in over 150 languages.

### EMOTIONAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

It's very common for your mental health to be affected when your physical health is poor. When you're not feeling well in your body, this can drag down your mental health as well. You may be feeling more anxious or depressed than usual. You might even find that your usual coping strategies don't help as well as they usually do. The best thing that you can do for yourself if you are struggling is to reach out for help. You don't have to go through this alone. It's helpful to talk to friends and family, but you might also find it helpful to talk to a professional. Talking to a professional can give you the space you need to talk about your struggles freely. They can also support you to understand what you are going through and develop strategies for coping with your condition.

#### Crisis Supports

A crisis can include difficulty dealing with stress, overwhelming feelings, symptoms of depression, anxiety, psychosis, suicidal thoughts or any concerns about your mental health or that of a loved one. The resources in this section can help you when you're experiencing a crisis.

If you feel like you might be in danger of hurting yourself or others, you can also call 9-1-1 OR take yourself go to your nearest emergency department.

#### **BC Crisis Line**

- 1-800-SUICIDE (BC-wide)
- 1-800-784-2433
- [www.crisistextline.ca](http://www.crisistextline.ca)
- Text "HOME" to 686868 to begin a text-based conversation with a trained responder
- All services are available 24/7 for all ages and any type of crisis

#### **Information & resources for suicide and self-harm**

## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BY HEALTH AUTHORITY

Mental health services are recommended for any mental health issues that makes it harder for you to function on a daily basis. These supports are for people who are ready to seek help beyond talking about the problem to a friend, family member or someone on a crisis line. We've organized them by what is available in your health authority. If you don't know your health authority, [you can find out what health authority you're in here.](#)

Reasons to seek mental health services may include anxiety and panic attacks, severe mood lows/depression, or recurrent suicidal thoughts. A doctor's referral is sometimes required for these services.



### Vancouver Coastal Health

### Fraser Health

### Island Health

### Interior Health

### Northern Health

## FREE AND LOW COST COUNSELLING

Community counselling is a free and/or low-cost counselling service often provided through non-profit or charitable organizations. Below are some things to consider when seeking low-cost counselling:

- Some programs offer a “sliding scale,” which means that their rates change based on your income. It is often up to you to request sliding scale fees; you may have to advocate for this.
- There may be a waitlist for free and low-cost services. You may want to call more than one agency to put your name on a waitlist.
- It is reasonable to request a free 15-minute free phone “meet and greet” to see if you and the counsellor are a “good fit” and ask them questions about their approach and experience. They may ask you questions as well.
- Not every counsellor will have experience working with someone with post-viral fatigue or related illnesses. You can ask: “What are your areas of expertise/specialization?” A responsible counsellor will seek out information to better understand your condition if they are uninformed.
- Many counsellors are willing to provide services by phone/online upon request if this reduces barriers to accessing services.
- When accessing free or low-cost counselling services you may not get to choose your counsellor. But remember you have every right to ask questions to ensure they can offer the type of support you need.

### Low Cost Counselling Services

The list below is just a starting point. Many communities have community counselling programs. If you do not see your community listed below you can call BC211 to locate your nearest community counselling program.

Please note the following list, including services and pricing, can be subject to change.

**Vancouver** - List of reduced cost counselling services in Vancouver, updated regularly.

**Victoria** - List of reduced cost counselling services in Victoria, updated regularly.

**Kelowna** - Non-profit agency offering affordable counselling provided by Master's level professionals to diverse clients in the Central Okanagan.

**Prince George** - Charitable organization offering counselling with Master's level students to residents of Prince George and surrounding areas.

### **Province wide**

- Low-cost counselling list put together by Spinal Cord Injury BC for the general public.
- Searchable database for affordable in-person and online counsellors with prices ranging between \$30-\$60 for individual counselling.

### **Canada-wide**

- Full range of free mental health support and counselling to people of all ages in every part of Canada. Funded by Health Canada. Operated and open 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week. They also offer a number of downloadable PDF resources as well as self-directed e-courses.

**First Nations Health Authority's Health Benefits Program:** Counselling Services

- List of acceptable counselling providers under FNHA benefits program coverage.

If you have extended health benefits that cover counselling, or are in a financial position to pay for full fee counselling (\$100+ an hour depending on professional background and experience), you can find a counsellor in private practice. The links below allow you to search for different counsellors, to see who might be the best fit for you.

Search tool for finding a Registered Clinical Counsellor in BC

Search tool for finding a Registered Social Worker in private practice in BC

Search tool for finding a Psychologist in BC

Directory of private pay BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) therapists committed to serving BIPOC in all their intersections



## ONLINE & SELF-HELP RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH

These online resources offer information and tools for improving mental health, including self-directed online courses.

**CBT Skills Groups** - Online [8 week CBT groups](#) for improving mental health. Doctor's referral required.

**Anxiety BC** - Online [information and tools](#) for managing anxiety.

**Bounce Back** - [Self-help program](#) for depression, access to full CBT course requires doctor's referral.

## FOR CAREGIVERS & SUPPORT PEOPLE

Family and caregivers also need support. With the onset of a serious health condition, often relationships with those closest to us can be affected in ways beyond our control. You will likely come to rely on loved ones more than usual for support around both the emotional and practical aspects of daily life. Asking for help and both broadening and strengthening your support system is an important part of your recovery. It's important that those in your support system know they are also deserving of support through this adjustment.

**Family Caregivers of BC** - Provincial non-profit supporting individuals caring physically or emotionally for a family member, friend, or neighbour. They offer access to [education, information and support](#).

## FOOD & NUTRITION

Below you'll find some resources that may help you to manage digestive health and access enough food for you and/or your family.

### **HealthLink BC**- Dietician Services

While living with post-viral fatigue, you might notice changes to how you feel when you eat different foods. Or you might find it difficult to eat the right foods to get the energy and nutrition you need. HealthLink BC offers programs and services designed to help residents of BC [make healthy eating and nutrition choices](#). Referrals are not required to access this service. Call 8-1-1 to self-refer.

### **Free & Low-Cost Groceries**

Post-viral fatigue might affect your ability to work. If you need assistance with providing you and your family with food, you can access the resources listed below.

**Province-wide list of food banks** - [Free food](#) provided to individuals who are low income. Household income threshold may apply in some communities.

### **Food Bank on Wheels**- Lower Mainland

Free mobile [home delivery service](#). Provides perishable and non-perishable food to families who are in need but unable to access regular food banks due to illness or disability in the family.

### **Quest Food Exchange**- Lower Mainland

[Quest](#) is a not-for-profit grocery store. They have five locations across the lower mainland. These stores are not open to the public, you need a referral to access them. You can get a referral from any local charity, non-profit, school, church, healthcare practitioner or certified helping professional. They provide access to healthy affordable food.

### **Food Stash Market**- Vancouver

[Food Stash Market](#) is a weekly food rescue market, grocery box delivery, and community fridge program offered to anyone. You can "pay what you feel" to access their groceries.

### **Community Fridges**

In recent years, many communities have set up their own “community fridges” and “community pantries”. These are fridges and pantries that can be accessed by anyone at any time of day. The food available in these fridges and pantries will vary greatly based on what has been donated that week. The best way to find these resources is to Google “community fridge” or “community pantry” and the name of your town.

### **Self-Help Resources for Nutrition**

#### **The Provincial Nutrition Resource Inventory**

This website lists a collection of [healthy eating and nutrition resources](#), if you'd like to learn more about nutrition.

### **SELF-MANAGEMENT**

Self-management involves learning about your conditions/symptoms and establishing strategies and habits that support you in your everyday life. The below self-management resources can support you in coping with symptoms and managing day-to-day life while living with post-viral fatigue.

#### **Online & Virtual Self-Management Resources**

##### **Self-Management BC**

[Self-management programs](#) for adults of all ages living in BC who are living with one or more ongoing health issues.

##### **ME/CFS & Fibromyalgia**

[Non-profit organization](#) offering a variety of articles, forms, worksheets, and online books in their website library, as well as self-help and self-study courses with low-cost and free options.

##### **Bateman Horne Center**

Education library with [information and self-management](#) reading materials and videos on ME/CFS, Fibromyalgia, and Long-COVID.

##### **Sniffly**

[Virtual rehab program](#) for loss of smell and taste due to COVID-19. \$25 for full access to online videos and resources.

### **Pain Resources**

#### **Change Pain Clinic**

[Online sessions](#) available to anyone in BC with MSP coverage. Programming includes topics related to safe movement, healing after trauma, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), central sensitivity, yoga, somatic therapy, and more.

#### **Pain BC**

[Online resources](#) to promote, educate, and empower individuals living with chronic pain. Provide a variety of education, resource support, and self-help/self-study online programs and tools. Offers a “Coaching for Health” program and Pain Support Line available Monday-Friday, 9am-4pm.

#### **UBC Pharmacists Clinic**

Offers [free pharmacy consultations](#) by telephone, video conference or in person to answer questions and discuss medical management; including prescription, non-prescription, supplements, and natural health products. Consults may be booked as a group appointment or personalized 60-minute appointment with possible follow up. No referral required. This clinic does not prescribe or fill medications.

## SLEEP RESOURCES

### Kelty's Key

This is a free website with [multiple self-directed modules](#) on sleep topics including beliefs about sleep, thought challenging, and sleep hygiene.

### Sleep Series by Northern Pain Center

This is a free website that provides [information, resources, worksheets and research](#) about sleep and sleep management. Even though it has some focus on the connection of pain and sleep it provides comprehensive information that is useful for people without pain as well.

### Sleepwell

This is a free website that aims to educate people on [how to get back to sleep](#) and provides information on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) along with CBT-I resources such as books, apps, and paid programs.

## MEDICAL CANNABIS

Many people find that medicinal cannabis can support them with managing issues such as pain and sleep problems. You may wish to explore whether cannabis can be of benefit to you.

### Canadian Cannabis Clinics

Support for [access to medical cannabis and education](#). Canada-wide with access to free in person and virtual appointments.

### Green Leaf Medical Clinic

[Virtual cannabis clinic](#) that assesses patients in Canada for the appropriateness of using medical cannabis to treat or manage symptoms. Membership is offered on a sliding scale and includes access to educational resources and virtual group medical visits on the following topics: Ask the expert cannabis series, immune health and optimizing immunity, acupuncture for chronic illness, and osteopathy & chronic conditions.

## FINDING A FAMILY DOCTOR

### Urgent and primary Care Centres

Available to those who do not have a family doctor or who require alternative care options when same-day or next-day appointments are needed. Centres offer better [access to same-day, urgent, non-emergency health care](#), including in the evenings and on weekends. Provides an alternative for visiting emergency departments for issues that do not need to be seen in a hospital.

### HealthLink BC and the Physician Directory

Patients who are looking for a family doctor should contact HealthLink BC by dialing 8-1-1. They will work with you to determine if there is a physician attachment service in your community and provide information on the physician directory as well as [walk-in clinics](#).

## ACCESSIBILITY

### SPARC BC Parking Pass

Available to individuals who have mobility limitations, including those who live with pain or need to pace and conserve physical energy. Individuals can [apply for either temporary or permanent parking permits](#).

### HandyDART- Translink

[Door-to-door, shared-ride service](#) for individuals who have mobility limitations and are unable to use regular public transit without assistance.

## MEDICAL & HEALTH EQUIPMENT

### Red Cross Health Equipment Loan Program

Short term [loans of basic health care equipment](#) including but not limited to: a cane, walker, shower chair, grab bar etc.

### AssistList

Website for [buying and selling used medical equipment](#). Some items can also be found on Craigslist. *Note: Medical equipment should be inspected for safety by a medical supplies outlet prior to use.*

### Community Occupational Therapy Assessment

If you are concerned about your safety while walking or transferring in the home or community, call your health authority's central intake number to [self-refer and request an "in-home mobility and safety assessment."](#) The health authority may subsidize medical equipment in situations where there is very high risk of falls. Your family doctor can also send in a referral.

## EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Living with post-viral fatigue might mean that you need supports at work that you didn't need before. These might include accommodations around your work schedule and duties, or ergonomic office equipment such as a foot stool or back support.

### Disability Alliance BC

A [guide for disclosing your disability](#) to your employer and information on workplace adaptations.

### Ergonomic Workstation Set-up

Self-help document for workers solving ergonomic problems with [computers and workstations](#). Includes recommendations on layout, lighting, posture, and organizing the work day to reduce likelihood of injury.

### Canadian Centre of Occupational Health and Safety

A [comprehensive ergonomic guide](#) inclusive of equipment, environment and positioning resources.

### Work BC Assistive Technology Services

[Free ergonomic assessment](#) and funding for recommended equipment.

### Neil Squire Society

Provides support for [employment, assistive technology and ergonomic support](#) for people with disabilities.

## ONLINE LONG-COVID COMMUNITY & SOCIAL SUPPORTS

The internet and social media may not be a reliable source of evidence-based medical advice (always ask your doctor), but can offer support, common shared experiences, stories, and a sense of community with others who are also experiencing post-viral fatigue related to COVID-19.

### **COVID Long Haulers Canada**

Canadian [online community for COVID-19](#) survivors, their families, and supporters. Connects people with support groups, information, and research studies.

### **Long-COVID Canada**

Canada-wide organization providing [advocacy, support, and resources](#) for those with Long-COVID.

### **Body Politic - Long-COVID**

Online platform with [media, stories and community of support](#) for those with Long-COVID.

### **Long-COVID on Reddit**

[Online forum](#) for individuals with Long-COVID.

### **The Mighty**

[Supportive community](#) for people facing health challenges and the people who care for them. No matter where you are in your health journey, you'll find a story on The Mighty from someone who's been there too.

### **Long-COVID on Instagram**

You can use hashtags on social media to find other people who have had similar experiences with post-viral fatigue. Examples of hashtags you could search for include things like [#covidlonghaulers](#) and [#longcovid](#) [#postviralsyndrome](#)