

Caring for Seniors During an Emergency

While many Manitoba seniors are active and self-sufficient, there are some who will need extra support during a flood, particularly if their homes are directly affected and if they live alone. Everyone, including seniors, will react differently to the stress of dealing with a flood. It's natural for people to:

- feel overwhelmed and unable to focus on daily tasks
- get preoccupied with a particular loss (ex: pets, belongings, personal space)
- feel overwhelmed, helpless or hopeless
- get preoccupied with the past and previous losses or grief

Watch for signs of anxiety or stress in seniors, including:

- withdrawal and isolation (ex: staying indoors, not bringing in mail or getting groceries)
- denial of the situation, refusing help or personal contact
- unkempt appearance, taking unhealthy risks, not taking medication
- change in eating habits, appetite, sleep patterns
- talk of being a burden, depression, hopelessness

Take care of older relatives, friends or neighbours during an emergency:

- Keep a watchful eye on them and check in with them regularly.
- Take time to listen and let them talk out their anxiety and concerns.
- Remind them they're important in your life by spending time with them (ex: walks, having meals together).
- Accept their offers to help where they can.
- Include them in flood plans, emergency responses and clean-up work. Offer to help with heavy lifting and clean up, without taking over and doing it yourself.
- Help them with tasks that look like they might be difficult (ex: carrying groceries, getting to appointments, cleaning, cooking).
- Bring extreme needs to the attention of health workers or contacts listed below for follow-up (ex: extreme anxiety or trouble sleeping for an extended period of time).
- Help them connect with community or faith groups that work with and help seniors, if it seems appropriate.
- Support and encourage them to stay connected to the community (ex: social gatherings and outings, entertainment, funerals, hospital visits).

Use outside support and resources when you need them

If you, your family, friends or neighbours are having a hard time dealing with stress, you can get help:

- Health Links – Info Santé can help you find resources through your local regional health authority or community mental health services office. Call 204-788-8200 in Winnipeg; toll free 1-888-315-9257 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Manitobans can call Manitoba Farm and Rural Support Services at 1-866-367-3276 toll free; 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. weekdays. Or, go to <http://www.ruralsupport.ca>.
- Kline Community Health Centre 24-hour Crisis Line can provide counselling and referrals for all Manitobans. Call 204-786-8686 in Winnipeg; toll free 1-888-322-3019; 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide the Manitoba Suicide Line is available to all Manitobans. Call 1-877-435-7170 toll free; 24 hours a day, seven days a week; or go to <http://www.reasonstolive.ca>.
- Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat – Seniors Information Line provides support for seniors across the province. Call 204-945-6565 in Winnipeg; 1-800-665-6565 toll free; 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays.
- Age & Opportunity: Support Services for Older Adults can provide counselling services and free home safety audits for older adults. Call 204-956-6440 in Winnipeg; 1-888-333-3121 toll free; 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

June 2014