

# Caring Connections Chronicle

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**Birds will sing even after the storm**



## HAVE WE ALL HAD IT UP TO HERE?

It certainly seems that Covid isn't going away any time soon. Sadly, we're all pretty sick of wearing masks, washing our hands, disinfecting everything we touch, and watching people get needles poked into their arms on the news every night. We've read the Covid protocols so many times we can recite them by heart, and we'd probably sell our souls to be able to join some relatives for dinner - even the ones we don't like. Those of us who are caregivers are likely in need of something, anything, that would provide a short break from even the most loved of loved ones. Welcome to our Had It Up To Here edition, in which you will find updated Covid information, some reading suggestions, online links to sites that will whisk you away to virtual tours and adventures, some signs of spring, and caregiving advice and resources, because of course, that's what this newsletter is all about.

Stay strong, everyone! We're on your side.

### Vaccines 101 – What Do I Need to Know About the COVID Vaccine?



We all know that the government and public health experts want everyone to get vaccinated for COVID-19 as quickly as possible in order for us to return to some sense of normalcy. However, there is a lot of information out there about the different types of vaccines, when and where they will be available, and how effective they'll be in stopping the spread of the virus. It seems that every day there is more and more information coming at us and it can be difficult to know what's what!

Here are answers to some frequently asked questions, as well as links to trusted sources where you can go to get the most up to date information:

#### There are different vaccines – will I be able to choose which one I get?

The Government of Ontario is coordinating the delivery of vaccines in a phased approach to ensure those most at risk are vaccinated first. The type of vaccine you are offered may depend on things like

current supply and transportation and storage requirements, so it is likely that you will not have a choice in which vaccine you receive. Depending on where you live, you will be given the vaccine available to you at that time at your local clinic site. It is important to remember that any vaccine offered will be both effective and safe.

#### Can the vaccine give me the COVID infection?

No - none of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in development use the live virus that causes COVID-19.

#### What are the side effects of the vaccine?

The most common side effects are much like other vaccines. These include feeling sore at the site where the vaccine was given, feeling tired, headache, and slight fever. You can expect to be informed specifically about these risks as a part of giving your consent to vaccination. As with every vaccine, data on safety and effectiveness is monitored and will be updated as time goes on. So much media attention is on the new vaccines right now and so every adverse occurrence, even the very rare ones, are

broadcast in the news making them seem more common than they are.

### **Do I still need to follow public health guidance (masking and distancing) after receiving the vaccine?**

Yes - building up immunity takes time, both within your own body and the “herd” at large. We don’t yet know what level of immunity in the population is sufficient to achieve community immunity. Until that time, Canadians should continue to wash their hands, stay home when sick, maintain physical distancing, wear a face mask as appropriate, and keep using good cough and surface hygiene.

### **I may have had COVID-19; do I still need the vaccine?**

There have been reports of people who have already suffered with COVID-19 getting sick again with it. It is likely that vaccination will be recommended for everyone.

### **Will I have to get the COVID-19 vaccine every year like the flu shot?**

It is too early to know. As more and more people are vaccinated against COVID-19, and as time passes, more will be learned about our body’s immune responses and how the virus is evolving.

### **Trusted Sources of Information:**

Government of Ontario - <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/getting-covid-19-vaccine-ontario>

Thunder Bay District Health Unit - [www.tbdhu.com/covidvaccines](http://www.tbdhu.com/covidvaccines)

Northwestern Health Unit - [www.nwhu.on.ca/covid19](http://www.nwhu.on.ca/covid19)

## **Updates on Vaccinations:**

### **How to prepare for conversations about COVID-19 vaccination**

Many, but not all, older adults and those who care for them are ready for and eagerly awaiting their turn for a COVID-19 vaccine. For those who are hesitant to roll up their sleeves, the clinician's role as a care partner is vitally important in the decision-making process.

### **Do you have clear, evidence-based answers ready for questions like:**

1. Does the vaccine contain mercury, aluminum or food allergens?

2. Why should I get the vaccine instead of taking my chances with the virus?

3. Is the risk of getting side effects from the vaccine high?

## **Tips and Tools..**

Ready-to-use answers to these and other common COVID-19 vaccine questions can be found in the PGLO's new [Facts and Fiction: COVID-19 mRNA vaccinations](#) slide deck for clinicians. A video of these slides presented by Dr. Kevin Young, PGLO Co-Medical Director (Geriatric Medicine) and Physician Lead, North Simcoe Muskoka Specialized Geriatric Services, and a tip sheet for addressing vaccine hesitancy is available.

### **Kevin Young's video:**

<https://rqps.on.ca/?s=Supporting+COVID-19+Vaccine+Uptake+in+Older+Adults>

## **4 Tools for Mindfulness for Caregivers**



Recent estimates show that **80 percent** of caregivers in the US are not healthcare professionals. Given the both physically and emotionally taxing nature of the work, plus the fact that most caregivers aren’t professionally trained, it should come as no surprise that many caregivers suffer from anxiety. In fact, so many caregivers complain of anxiety symptoms that “caregiver stress” is now a medically recognized term.

The first thing every caregiver should understand is that it’s just as important to **take care of themselves** as it is to take care of their patients. One free, easy, and effective way caregivers can better cope with the stresses of work is to schedule a few moments of mindfulness practice every day.

## Mindfulness: It's Not Just Meditation

Before we even suggest how to practice mindfulness, we should clear up a common misconception about mindfulness. When people hear the word “mindfulness” they often assume it's synonymous with meditation. But while meditation can certainly be considered a mindfulness practice, mindfulness encompasses a wide variety of exercises designed to help people better manage stress. Besides meditation, a few common mindfulness practices include journaling, music therapy, yoga, talk therapy, and Tai Chi. As long as the technique helps bring you into the present moment, it could be considered a form of mindfulness.

Daily mindfulness practice helps caregivers perform their duties without becoming overburdened with stress. Luckily, there are tons of convenient apps available to help caregivers find their inner Zen through their smartphone. Below, we'll go over five excellent apps all caregivers can use to start their journey towards inner calm.

### Universal Breathing

For those who aren't aware, pranayama is the ancient yogic discipline of controlling the breath to achieve a greater state mental clarity. Many yogis use pranayama exercises to help them enter deeper states of meditation and quickly silence mental chatter. Thanks to the [Universal Breathing](#) app, now you don't need to travel to an ashram to learn basic pranayama exercises to help you through your day. People who use the Universal Breathing app have access to tons of information on pranayama technique, breathing courses, guided sessions, and a progress journal. Find out what exercises work best for you and read about pranayama theory on this fascinating app.

Today, the Universal Breathing app is available for free in the App Store, Google Play, and on the Nook.

### Journey

If you're not into guided meditations or breathing exercises, perhaps you'd prefer a mindfulness practice like journaling. Before you put down journaling as “not real mindfulness,” you should know that many [scientific studies](#) prove that journaling helps boost the immune system and relieves depression.

Probably the easiest way to get into the journaling habit in our digital age is to download the [Journey app](#). The Journey app allows you to write and store your journal entries in the Cloud and add photos from your albums. You can even share moments with friends and family across multiple platforms. The Journey app is available on Apple, Android, and Microsoft products.

### Wild Mind Buddhist Meditation

[WildMind's Bodhi app](#) has more than 200 guided meditation sessions based on ancient Buddhist practices. Although most of these meditations are indebted to Buddhist teachings, you don't have to know anything about Buddhist traditions to get a great deal out of this app. The two main practices encouraged in these meditation sessions include basic breath meditation and loving-kindness meditation (also known as [metta practice](#)). Most of these meditation sessions last between 15 to 20 minutes. WildMind's app also includes instructions on practicing walking meditation and tips to improve your meditation posture.

### Aura

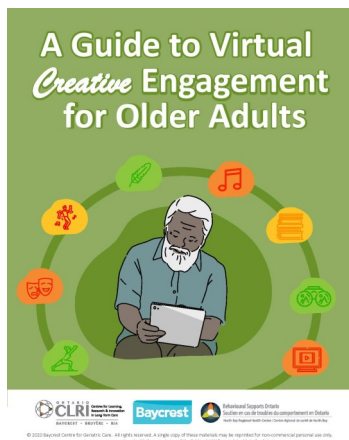
[Aura](#) is an award-winning mindfulness app tailored for people who live fast-paced lifestyles. All the Aura app asks is that you set aside three minutes every day for a guided meditation. That's it. If you feel like it, you could add a few of Aura's “micro-meditations” throughout your day, each of which lasts around 30 seconds. There are also relaxing forest soundscapes on Aura's app to help you get through particularly stressful days.

All of your meditations are tailored to your specific needs by AI technology and Aura keeps tabs on your mood so you can see whether or not certain meditations are working for you. Aura is available on Android and iOS devices.

## Mindfulness Practice: Every Caregiver's First Priority

Caregivers have a habit of neglecting their own well-being for their patients' sakes. Some caregivers even believe taking a few minutes out of the day to practice mindfulness is “selfish.” Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, taking a few minutes to practice mindfulness everyday will improve the quality of care you can give to your patient. It should be mandatory that all caregivers practice some form of mindfulness today, especially with all of these great apps literally at our fingertips.

## A Guide to Virtual Creative Engagement for Older Adults:



Despite the challenges that COVID has placed on caregivers, the pandemic has spurred new and innovative opportunities for virtual engagement and support. Caring Connections is delighted to share with our readers this delightful and informative guide. <https://clri-ltc.ca/files/2021/01/Virtual-Creative-Engagement-Guide-Jan7-2021-1.pdf> It was developed by the Ontario CLRI, Baycrest, and Behavioural Supports ON and was created in an effort to decrease boredom, under-stimulation, and loneliness guide by accessing and using telephone and online support. The suggestions have provided activities for seniors at various stages of cognition or levels of health. We have chosen the following five as our favourites.

### Google Arts and Culture Summary of Service:

This is a free, online platform with high-resolution image technology that allows individuals to tour museums and access art across the world from electronic devices. It presents numerous pictures of art and culture, which can be used to initiate discussion or increase visual stimulation. This service can be accessed right from the Google Arts Platform.

### National Film Board of Canada

**Summary of Service:** During COVID-19 The National Film Board of Canada has opened its library to allow free access to productions across a range of genres and lengths, from five minutes to over an hour. Films, documentaries, and animation are all available to stream for free.

### BBC Music Memories

**Summary of Service:** BBC in the UK has created a website that lists common musical choices for seniors (e.g., classics, radio programming, 50's

music) into categories and then further breaks those categories down by musicians. The user can make personalized playlists or event by using either Spotify or Apple Music platforms.

### Zoos and Aquariums

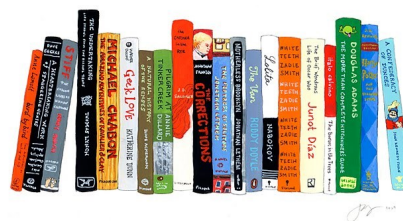
National Marine Sanctuaries website provides a great opportunity to travel to four underwater destinations on guided HD virtual tours. Share and enjoy these 360, pre-recorded immersive videos. The website also provides beautiful, underwater photography slides.

Monterey Bay Aquarium is a great option for soothing background videos. They have a number of live animal cameras, including two hypnotic and calming jellyfish options.

If the one you are caring for is an animal lover there are numerous opportunities to watch live animals around the world as they go about their day. Enjoy beavers at the San Diego Zoo [https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=518996938809763&ref=watch\\_permalink](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=518996938809763&ref=watch_permalink) as streamed from their Facebook, watch whales and sea lions splash at Orcalive <http://www.orca-live.net/community/>, or travel to China to watch baby pandas play in Wolong Grove Panda Yard

<https://explore.org/livecams/panda-bears/china-panda-cam-2>

## Public Library Free Access to Online Books



Check out your local Library which offers a free digital library card, giving free access to electronic books and audiobooks.

Find your closest public library using [Ontario Public Library](#).



Click on the image below for a link to hear the different birds sounds



### Easier-To-Find Information

This "one-stop" website [ontario.ca/AgingWell](http://ontario.ca/AgingWell) is for seniors across the province. To get this information by phone, call 1-888-910-1000 or 211 - which offers information 24 hours a day.

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