# **Why Gratitude Is Important During the Coronavirus Pandemic 04/23/2020  |  AdventHealth**

We’re living through unusual and trying times. The COVID-19 pandemic has people feeling [stressed](https://www.adventhealth.com/coronavirus-resource-hub/blog/seven-ways-manage-stress-during-covid-19-outbreak?listFilters=page%3D5) and frightened.

That’s why it’s perhaps more important than ever to focus on gratitude — the practice of noticing and being thankful for what is valuable and meaningful to you. It’s good for your mental and physical health, it can help you relax and its effects can help you stay well through the coronavirus pandemic and beyond.

**Yes, We Said Gratitude Is Good for Your Health**
Focusing on silver linings. Counting your blessings. Stopping to smell the roses.

These aren’t just cliches; they’re activities that research shows may enhance your quality of life. The health benefits of practicing gratitude are wide-ranging — and maybe even a bit surprising.

* **Improving your immune system.** The practice of gratitude can improve immune function, according to the [American Heart Association](https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/mental-health-and-wellbeing/thankfulness-how-gratitude-can-help-your-health). This is [especially important](https://www.adventhealth.com/coronavirus-resource-hub/blog/covid-19-precautions-people-risk-severe-illness?listFilters=search%3Dimmune%26sort_bef_combine%3Dfield_date%2BDESC) during the COVID-19 crisis, since people with compromised immune systems face a high risk of becoming severely ill from coronavirus.
* **Lowering your risk for mental health issues.** Studies have shown that people who practiced gratitude showed a significantly lower risk for major depression, generalized anxiety disorder and substance dependence and abuse, according to the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/September-2016/When-Looking-for-Happiness-Find-Gratitude).
* **Getting a handle on stress.** Focusing on positive emotions can help improve your ability to cope with stress, according to the [National Institutes of Health](https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2019/03/practicing-gratitude).
* **Setting yourself up for success.** In [clinical trials](https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/mental-health-and-wellbeing/thankfulness-how-gratitude-can-help-your-health), grateful people have been shown to exercise more and eat healthier diets.

**Practicing Gratitude Can Be Easy, Rewarding — And Fun**
Cultivating thankfulness isn’t homework, and it doesn’t require much time or energy. You can start small by taking a few moments to notice things that are going well in your life.

To help make this a regular habit, set aside a short time each day to intentionally practice gratitude. Try one or more of these activities to start.

**Jot Down Your Joys**
Make a habit of writing down the things you’re grateful for. It doesn’t have to be a long list, but if you regularly challenge yourself to identify and name your gratitude, you may begin to notice improvement in your emotional well-being.

Try sitting down and listing out:

* One place that is safe and relaxes you
* One thing that’s going well in your life
* Three things you enjoy
* Three things you’re looking forward to
* Two people whom you love and who love you

Or try an easy-to-remember acronym, HEART, as suggested by the [American Heart Association](https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/mental-health-and-wellbeing/thankfulness-how-gratitude-can-help-your-health):

* **H**ealth: Think of what your body allowed you to do today. Maybe your feet enabled you to walk around the house or your arms allowed you to hold a pet you love.
* **E**at: What nourishment did you provide your body today? What was your favorite meal?
* **A**ctivity: Did you do something today that you really enjoyed? Take a moment to reflect on and savor it.
* **R**elationship: Did you see or talk to someone today who brings you joy? Or are you planning to see someone on a video chat who fits that description? (Remember: The person in the mirror counts.)
* **T**ime: There’s no time like the present. Allow yourself to be grateful for the fact that you’re here.

If this sounds like too much to tackle, pick and choose what you’d like to focus on, and feel free to change it up depending on your mood or ability.

And if you find yourself saying that you have nothing to be grateful for, try thinking about all the little things you have. You may find that you’re taking for granted certain abilities or privileges you have that others don’t.

**Make Mealtimes Mindful**
Before and during meals, take time to appreciate the bounty on your table. When eating, slow down and savor every bite. Not only will you feel more thankful, but you’ll also be less likely to overeat.

**Count Blessings Instead of Sheep**
Before falling asleep, take a moment to think about the positive things that happened during your day. [Research](https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/scp-0000050.pdf) shows that gratitude may help you get a better night’s sleep.

**Stop and Savor**
It might be hard to recognize positive moments while they’re happening, but if you practice enough, you will get the hang of it. When you find yourself enjoying a moment — a sound, a memory, a conversation — try to pause for a bit and bask in the experience.

**Create Your Own Moments**
Devote time to yourself. You deserve some [pampering](https://www.adventhealth.com/coronavirus-resource-hub/blog/coronavirus-how-pamper-yourself-while-staying-home?listFilters=page%3D1), and it’ll be one more thing you can be grateful for later on.

**Pass It On**
The more selfless you are, the more you may get out of it. [Research](https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-017-4561-8) shows that you may feel happier and more satisfied with life when you volunteer. During this COVID-19 pandemic, you can help [make an impact on your community](https://www.adventhealth.com/coronavirus-resource-hub/blog/5-ways-help-your-community-during-coronavirus) while staying safe.

Find ways to give back and be part of the outpouring of support AdventHealth has received from the community on [our website](https://www.adventhealth.com/coronavirus-resource-hub/ways-give-back).

**Why We Need Gratitude Now**
In times of crisis, it’s important to [stay connected to others](https://www.adventhealth.com/coronavirus-resource-hub/blog/staying-connected-during-a-coronavirus-quarantine), and among its many other benefits, gratitude can help with this, too.

The [National Alliance on Mental Illness](https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/September-2016/When-Looking-for-Happiness-Find-Gratitude) reports that people who practice gratitude are:

* More generous and helpful
* More likely to offer emotional support
* More likely to share their possessions
* More willing to forgive others

If ever there was a time when these traits were needed, it’s now.

**Helping You Stay Well**
AdventHealth will help you navigate your way safely through the coronavirus outbreak.

For more tips on dealing with the pandemic, visit our [Coronavirus Resource Hub.](https://www.adventhealth.com/coronavirus-resource-hub) We’re continually updating the Hub with important news about COVID-19 that can help you stay informed, healthy and safe. © 2020 AdventHealth