

Mental Health Support

COVID-19 has led to a number of problems that affect the well-being of most people in Switzerland. Due to travel bans, isolation, and financial issues many students and colleagues from abroad may be particularly affected. This information sheet offers some guidance for people who are unfamiliar with the medical care system in Switzerland and who seek help for psychological/mental health problems. The information in this leaflet was put together with a focus on students and members of the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich but may also be helpful for other individuals in/near Zurich.

Acute Problems

If you suffer severely and are unable to wait several days for an appointment with a psychiatrist/psychologist, you can contact these professional support systems:

- [Ärztefon](#) - Tel. **0800 33 66 55**: Free of charge, helps arranging urgent appointments with medical doctors, often on the same day.
- [Emergency Department of the Universitätsspital Zürich](#) (“Notfall”): Walk-in emergency service. Please be aware that waiting times cannot be predicted. If you suspect to be infected with the novel Coronavirus, you should not enter the Emergency department. Call the [Ärztefon](#) for further advice and instructions!
- [Krisenintervention Zürich](#) (KIZ), PUK Zürich - Tel. **044 296 73 10** or [Kriseninterventionszentrum](#) (KIZ), IPW Winterthur - Tel. **052 264 37 00**: both are specialised mental health departments which offer advice via phone, you can also get appointments or help in their small inpatient facility.

In case of suicidal thoughts:

- If you are unable to cope with the situation, make a **medical emergency call** - Tel. **144!**
- If you are still able to talk via phone, call the [Ärztefon](#) for guidance - Tel. **0800 33 66 55**.
- If your suicidal thoughts are not overwhelming you and you still feel in control, you can also report to the [Emergency Department of the Universitätsspital Zürich](#) - consider asking somebody to come along with you!

Mental Health Problems

Mental Health Problems can manifest themselves quite differently. Do you feel depressed or angry most of the time? Do you constantly have problems falling asleep? Do you suffer from work related stress or do you feel helpless with everyday problems? Some persons might find themselves drinking too much alcohol in order to cope with stress. Whatever the specific problems you are experiencing, it is important to know that you do not need to be ashamed and should not hesitate to get help. Nobody is immune against mental health problems.

Stigma

Did you know that mental health issues are actually very common? It is estimated that about 40 - 70 % of the population will develop a psychiatric disorder at some point in their lifetime. The burden of these mental health issues is aggravated by the stigma that is still associated with psychological problems. Although mental health problems are just as serious as physical illnesses, many persons will not seek professional support because they feel ashamed. *There is no shame in seeking help!* Also, mental health professionals are obliged to professional secrecy.

Talking Mental Health

It might sound trivial, but the first thing you should consider is **talking to your friends, peers and family**. Many psychological issues can already be resolved or alleviated in this way.

If there is nobody you can talk to you can call the [Die Dargebotene Hand](#) (“Helping Hand”, Tel. **143**) which is a crisis helpline with experienced and trained volunteers. They are free of charge and anonymous counselling is possible. They also offer [chat contact](#). You will need to ask for a person fluent in English if you are unable to discuss your situation in German, French or Italian (there is, however, no guarantee that someone who speaks English, or your preferred language, will be on call).

If talking to your friends, peers and family does not help or is not possible and you suffer a lot you should **consider seeking mental health support**.

Workplace & Studies

For questions regarding COVID-19 and your workplace at University of Zurich and ETH Zurich you can find helpful information on the websites provided by the departments [Safety, Security and Environment \(University of Zurich\)](#) or [Safety, Security, Health, Environment \(ETH Zurich\)](#), respectively. The Website [„health@uzh“](#) (University of Zurich) gives an overview

Continues on page 2



Workplace & Studies (Continuation)

of health services and resources. ETH Human Resources also put together some useful information and counseling services with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic on their website [Support during the corona crisis](#). The [Psychological Counseling Services](#) (University of Zurich & ETH Zurich) offer support for problems related to your studies/doctorate, but also other personal issues. Appointments are free of charge for students. If you are worried about a wellbeing of a student that you are supervising, [counseling](#) can be provided for University of Zurich & ETH staff.



Psychotherapy? Psychiatry?

Psychotherapy refers to many psychological treatments for mental health problems. The central component of most psychological treatments is talking. Some forms of psychotherapy will also take into account behavioural exercises, meditation or other forms of interventions. The efficacy of modern forms of psychotherapy for many psychological problems is empirically well established. Psychiatry is a medical field and specialisation that cares for people with mental health issues. Psychiatric treatment usually includes psychotherapy, but, in some cases, medication or other therapies can be used additionally, depending on the preference of the person seeking help or the nature of the mental health problem. In Switzerland both, psychological therapists as well as medical doctors who specialized in psychiatry & psychotherapy, will offer psychotherapy.



Finding a Therapist

Many **family physicians** offer counselling and first-line psychological/psychiatric support for mental health issues. They also offer guidance if you need specialist treatment.

Almost every clinical psychologist and psychiatrist who is covered by health insurance in the Canton of Zurich is listed on [this website](#) hosted by the Zürcher Gesellschaft für Psychiatrie und Psychotherapie:

- You can choose a language or filter for therapists who are open for new patients (“Freie Therapieplätze”). You can also select a specialisation depending on your problem.
- If you click on “Suchen”, you will find a map of the Canton of Zurich showing the location of these caregivers and their contact information.

Many psychological associations also offer search engines like [this website](#) hosted by one of the largest psychological associations in Switzerland (FSP). If you want to pursue therapy in a language that is not offered by any therapists

near you, the ASP, another psychological association, offers a [list of psychological therapists who provide treatment in different languages](#). You could also use the [search engine](#) offered by the Swiss Medical Association (FMH) (only for physicians: use “Advanced search”, and specify your language and specify “Psychiatry and Psychotherapy” as the “Specialist title”).

The [Ambulatorium für kognitive Verhaltenstherapie und Verhaltensmedizin](#) which is part of the Department of Psychology of the University of Zurich and the [Department of Consultation-Liaison-Psychiatry and Psychosomatic Medicine](#) at *Universitätsspital Zürich* also offer psychotherapy.

After selecting a therapist, do not hesitate to call them or send them an e-mail. If there is an answering machine, leave a message with your contact information and ask them to call you back - **many therapists hold therapy sessions throughout the day and therefore will only be able to call you back later.**

Currently, many mental health therapists will offer consultations via phone or video calls.

It is recommended that you get to know the therapist via phone or in a first face-to-face consultation. You should then decide if you wish to continue with this therapist. Do not hesitate to discuss any doubts with the therapist - they know that a good personal relationship is of fundamental importance for any psychotherapy and will understand if you feel that the “chemistry” between you is not right. It is not at all uncommon to look for another therapist if you do not feel happy with the person and any professional therapist will understand your decision.



Mental Health Facilities

If an outpatient treatment is not sufficient or if you suffer from severe mental health problems and need intensive treatment, there are a number of psychiatric hospitals located in the Canton of Zurich. Their service will be covered by your health insurance if you are a resident of the Canton of Zurich:

[Psychiatrische Universitätsklinik Zürich](#)

Lenggstrasse 31, 8032 Zürich, Tel. **044 384 21 11**

[Integrierte Psychiatrie Winterthur – Zürcher Unterland](#)

Wieshofstrasse 102, 8408 Winterthur, Tel. **052 264 33 33**

[Sanatorium Kilchberg AG](#)

Alte Landstrasse 70, 8802 Kilchberg, Tel. **044 716 42 42**

[Clenia Privatklinik Schlössli](#)

Schlösslistrasse 8, 8618 Oetwil am See, Tel. **044 929 81 11**

These mental health facilities also offer many other services like day-care clinics and outpatient treatment.



Medical Care System

In Switzerland not every therapist is covered by your health insurance. Usually, psychiatrists (those who have their own practice and hold the title “FMH Psychiatrie und Psychotherapie”) will be reimbursed by your health insurance. For some psychologists offering treatment, you need to check in advance if the costs are covered and in some cases a **supplementary insurance** is recommended.

Qualified healthcare workers in mental health can be recognised by their title (for medical doctors “FMH Psychiatrie und Psychotherapie”; for psychologists there are a number of associations that award a title, such as “FSP Psychotherapie”, “ASP Psychotherapie”, “SBAP Psychotherapie”, etc.). As a rule of thumb for Switzerland, **psychiatrists as well as psychological psychotherapists offer psychotherapy**. However, many psychiatrists also offer treatment options like medication and they are authorised to issue sick leave notes. Due to the fact that most psychological psychotherapists are closely working together with psychiatrists you will also be able to get these services when getting help from a psychological psychotherapist.

Some therapists offering coaching, counselling or advice might not be covered by your health insurance - this does not necessarily mean that they are not offering professional support. However, if you are unable to pay for these services, we would generally suggest to turn to therapists that are covered by your insurance.

Check the “**Franchise**” of your health insurance - usually health insurance cover costs above a certain amount of money per year (this can range from 300 to 2500 CHF). Additionally, you will need to pay about 10 % of the costs up to 700 CHF each year (“**Selbstbehalt**”). In addition to the shame that is attributed to psychological problems, these costs contribute to people not seeking help for medical problems. Imagine you had a broken arm: *Would you tolerate a fracture of your forearm not being treated?* Seeking help can also be understood as an investment in your mental health and as a reasonable effort to prevent a prolongation of your suffering.

Very rarely, students from abroad may have an international insurance that only covers emergencies in Switzerland. If this is the case, **consider contacting your health insurance and discuss what they would pay for**.

Please see this [this website from ETH](#) or [this website from UZH](#) for more information on health insurance.



Any Questions?

If you have further questions, please see the contact details for mental health support that are listed in this leaflet, as well as the references and links in this document. Please note that while we select links to external websites carefully, we cannot guarantee for the accuracy or quality of these websites.