

Coronavirus and toilet paper: What drives people to ‘panic-buy’?

Toilet paper, paper towels and other products seemingly not essential for dealing with the novel coronavirus have been flying off the shelves as the public’s anxiety about the outbreak continues to drive so-called “panic buying.”

Officials have urged Americans to stop hoarding such supplies and to keep those who may not have the needs or ability to purchase such products in mind, but the unknowns about the ever-evolving situation are still driving thousands to the stores to stock up.

A PSYCHIATRIST’S ADVICE ON STAYING INDOORS

“Generally, urgent purchasing of necessities arises from a perceived threat of scarcity of resources, inability to obtain one’s essentials,” Amanda Spray, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist, and director of the Cohen Military Family Center at NYU Langone Health, told Fox News. “In the case of a crisis situation, it is human nature to want to prepare to have enough necessities to be prepared to feed and care for our families.”

Spray said it also can provide a sense of comfort to people who are used to being able to obtain what they need within 24 hours with just the click of a button. As far as the sudden urgent need for toilet paper, Spray said it’s likely a reaction to seeing what others around us are doing.

“Toilet paper is an item that has become a human essential,” she said. “When we start to hear that toilet paper is an in-demand item... we begin to purchase it before it may be needed. If others are buying it, we must need to be buying it, too. We imitate the behavior of others.”

SICK DURING CORONAVIRUS? WHEN TO HEAD TO THE DOCTOR

Misinformation about the virus and rumors about shutdowns or lockdowns have also created heightened anxieties among the public, as has the constant media coverage. Spray said that staying informed is important, but knowing how to do so in moderation is key.

“Consider watching news programs at regular intervals throughout the day, rather than continuously throughout the day,” she said. “Alternatively, if reading the news is preferable, consider allowing yourself to check at regular intervals, perhaps three to four times daily from reputable sources.”

And in the event that you do find yourself or a loved one becoming overwhelmed, it’s important to acknowledge it, Spray said.

CORONAVIRUS MYTHS VS FACT: POPULAR THEORIES ON THE NOVEL VIRUS DEBUNKED

“If these fears progress to panic, it can be helpful to engage in paced breathing, where one breathes in for a count of four, holds the breath for a count of one, breathes out for a count of six and holds for one count,” she said, adding that the technique can also help to regulate the nervous system.

Note: See the current interactive map [here](#).

“It can also be helpful to engage in cognitive-behavioral techniques, including cognitive restructuring,” Spray said. “Think about what thoughts are going through your mind when you begin to panic. Maybe it’s a catastrophic thought you will die from the novel coronavirus. Then, consider the evidence for this thought and against this thought. Use this evidence to develop a balanced thought that may be more evidence-based to help soothe yourself.”

Others have recommended staying calm for the sake of children who are also home with parents, and who often take their cues from how adults are behaving. Spray agreed and said that it is important to share information with children in a way that is appropriate for their age.

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“They are out of school or preschool, and hearing the news explaining that people are getting sick,” she said. “Providing an explanation that they are not in school in an effort to stay safe can be reassuring.”

Source:

<https://www.foxnews.com/health/coronavirus-driving-toilet-paper-panic-buying>

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