

Post Covid-19 Self Help Rehabilitation Guide

Eating, drinking and swallowing
recovery following Covid-19

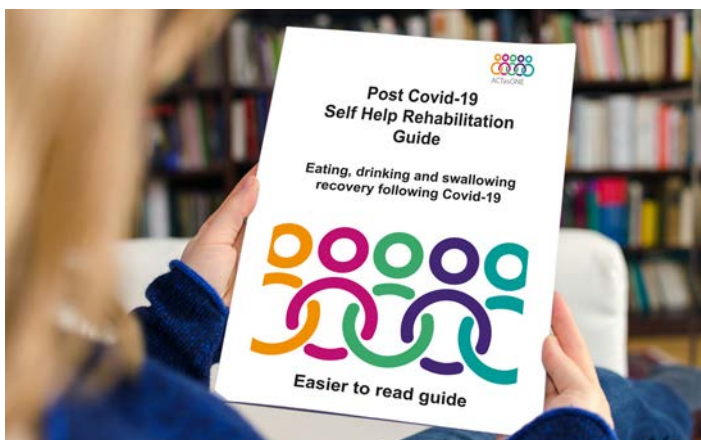


Easier to read guide

Introduction



These booklets are for people who have had Covid-19 and have symptoms that have lasted for more than 4 weeks.



There are 6 booklets in total. This one is about eating, drinking and swallowing recovery following Covid-19.



The booklets have been developed by lots of different healthcare professionals.

They work together to help people with long Covid.

Eating, drinking and swallowing recovery following Covid-19



Some people who have had Covid-19 may have difficulties eating, drinking and swallowing.

A speech and language therapist can help by giving you advice on how to eat and drink safely.



If you have spent time in intensive care you may have voice difficulties.

This is called dysphonia.

You may also have respiratory problems. This means finding it hard to breathe.



Some patients have muscle weakness because they haven't moved their body while they were ill.

This can affect swallowing and your voice.



People with severe Covid-19 may have had a tracheostomy.

A tracheostomy is an opening made at the front of your neck so a tube can be put into your windpipe to help you breathe.



A tracheostomy can affect your speech, swallowing and voice.

Some of the symptoms are:

- Changes to your voice making it difficult to be heard
- Your voice tiring by the end of the day and not being able to change the pitch of your voice
- Coughing or choking when you are eating or drinking
- Changes in the way you communicate like understanding what people are saying to you
- Putting your thoughts or feelings into words
- Difficulty reading or having a conversation
- Having a cough or noisy breathing.

Tips to help when eating and drinking



Here are some tips to help with eating and drinking:

- Sit as upright as possible when eating and drinking
- Take slow, steady sips or bites
- Stop and rest if you're feeling breathless or tired
- Try smaller meals more often in the day
- Softer foods may be easier to chew and swallow
- Eat food you enjoy.

When to get help from your GP



If you have any of the following symptoms, get in touch with your GP:

- Coughing or choking during eating and/or drinking
- A wet and gurgly voice
- New episodes of chest infections / More chest infections / Regular chest infections.



Fatigue symptoms may also impact the safety of your swallowing
Fatigue is extreme tiredness.



There is more information about this in self help rehabilitation guide.
Fatigue and sleep.



Make sure when you're eating and drinking you are awake and fully alert



Speak to your GP if you think fatigue is impacting your swallowing.

Mouth care



Some people may experience a different taste, bad breath, a dry mouth or a build up of spit in their mouths.



It is important to keep your mouth clean and moist.

This is to stop any bad bacteria.

You should:



- Brush your teeth twice a day with toothpaste
- Have sips of water or non-caffeinated drinks regularly



- Use lip balm to stop lips from getting cracked and sore
- Try sucking on fruit sweets, mints or chewing gum to make spit and keep your mouth moist.

Improving your nutrition



Covid-19 can change your taste and smell.

This can affect your appetite and ability to eat.

This will make it difficult to get the nutrition you need.

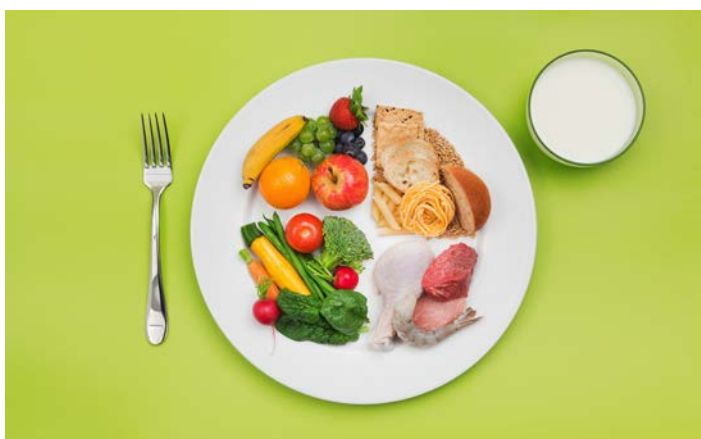


Nutrition is the food you need for a healthy diet.

For example your five a day.



You may lose weight, have a poor appetite or your muscles may feel weak.



If you have these symptoms you need to think about the types of food you are eating.

This resource was developed collectively by members of the multidisciplinary team featuring healthcare professionals working in health organisations across Bradford district and Craven. We are grateful to Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust and Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust for giving us permission to use and adapt their resource for Bradford district and Craven patients.

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Please email us if you have any feedback or need this guide in an alternative format actasone@nhs.net

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