

POST COVID-19 SELF-HELP REHABILITATION GUIDE

This booklet is for people who have had COVID-19 and have symptoms that last more than four weeks



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WHO IS THIS BOOKLET FOR?

This booklet is for people who have had COVID-19 (with or without a positive test) and have symptoms that last more than four weeks.

It may be useful for family members, carers, partners and friends.

This booklet will help you find out more about:

- assessment
- common symptoms
- self-management
- rehabilitation.

WHAT IS COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infectious virus mostly affecting the lungs. The majority of people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment, however some people will require hospital treatment. This may include ventilator support on a critical care or respiratory care unit.

Typically, during recovery people experience breathlessness at rest and during activities. This is a normal symptom of COVID-19.

What is long COVID or post COVID syndrome?

After developing COVID-19 people usually start to feel better in a few weeks. Unfortunately, some people take longer to get better. Long COVID can affect your whole body. Ongoing or new symptoms of COVID-19 can change and come and go over a period of time. A number of terms exist to describe symptoms after contracting COVID-19 based mainly on the length of time the symptoms last.

Acute COVID-19 – signs and symptoms that last up to four weeks.

Ongoing symptomatic COVID-19 – symptoms that persist past four weeks and up to 12 weeks.

Post COVID syndrome – refers to symptoms lasting more than twelve weeks without an alternative cause.

Long COVID is another term that can be used instead of Post COVID and terms symptoms that persist past the acute stage (4–12 weeks and onwards).

Common symptoms of long COVID

Signs and symptoms after acute COVID-19 can be highly variable and wide ranging. The most commonly reported ones are:

Respiratory symptoms

- Breathlessness
- Cough

Cardiovascular symptoms

(heart and circulation)

- Chest tightness
- Chest pain
- Palpitations

General symptoms

- Fatigue
- Fever
- Pain

Musculoskeletal symptoms

- Joint pain
- Muscle pain

Neurological symptoms

- Cognitive impairment ('brain fog', loss of concentration, or memory issues)
- Headache
- Sleep disturbance
- Peripheral neuropathy symptoms (pins and needles, and numbness)
- Dizziness
- Delirium (in older people)

Gastrointestinal symptoms

- Abdominal pain
- Nausea
- Diarrhoea
- Anorexia and reduced appetite (in older people)

Psychological/psychiatric symptoms

- Symptoms of depression
- Symptoms of anxiety

Ear, nose and throat symptoms

- Tinnitus (ringing in the ears)
- Earache
- Sore throat
- Dizziness
- Loss of taste and/or smell

Dermatological symptoms

- Skin rashes

IMPORTANCE OF REHABILITATION

Due to your COVID-19 infection, whether in hospital or not, you may feel that your muscle strength and exercise tolerance has reduced and you may find you are struggling with tasks that were normal before, such as having a shower, reading a book or swallowing. This can be a side effect of not being as active while recovering.

Whilst you are recovering, rehabilitation will help improve your exercise tolerance, muscle strength, breathlessness and fatigue. Advice will include focused breathing, functional and physical exercises and psychological self-care that will aim to improve your physical, psychological and functional wellbeing to then eventually return to your normal daily routines.

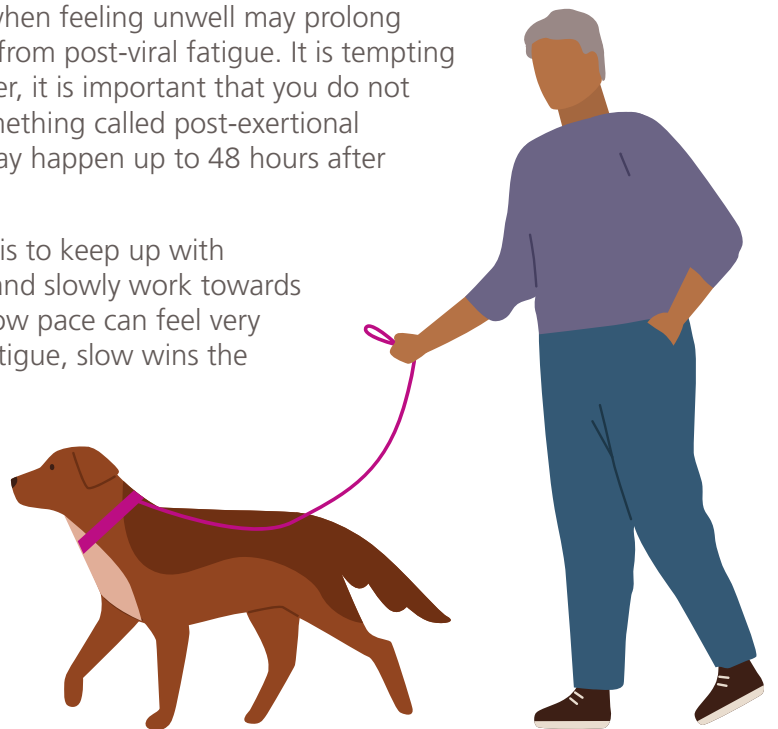
It is really important that you start small and very gradually increase activities, as well as decreasing them if you experience a worsening of symptoms (flare up).

Research shows that 'pushing through' when feeling unwell may prolong symptoms and slow down your recovery from post-viral fatigue. It is tempting to do more when you feel better. However, it is important that you do not overdo things as you may experience something called post-exertional malaise which means that the flare up may happen up to 48 hours after the activity.

What you can do when you are at home is to keep up with breathing exercises and advice provided and slowly work towards getting back to your daily routine. The slow pace can feel very frustrating but in the case of post-viral fatigue, slow wins the race. Many people with long COVID tell us that when they have slowed down instead of pushing through they have noticed a quicker rate of recovery.

Being suitably hydrated and nourished plays an important role in your body's response to and recovery from the COVID-19 virus too.

This booklet has been developed by a range of healthcare professionals who work together – referred to as multidisciplinary team – to help people with long COVID. Working together we have developed self help information to help you recover from specific problems. We have also included links to additional services and resources that could help your recovery.



BREATHLESSNESS

Breathlessness is a normal sensation experienced by everybody. Due to COVID-19, you may feel this at rest, being active or when feeling anxious. It is important to understand, as you recover from COVID-19, that mild to moderate breathlessness when you are active is not a bad thing. If you exert yourself and become breathless regularly, your muscles will get stronger, you will use oxygen more efficiently and you will start to feel less breathless overall.

Rate of perceived exertion (RPE) scale

Think about how breathless you are and rate it out of 10

- 1 Very Light. No problem
- 2 Very Light. Very easy
- 3 Fairly light. Fairly Easy
- 4 Moderate. Beginning to feel puffed
- 5 Fairly hard. Beginning to feel puffed
- 6 Hard. Feel puffed
- 7 Very hard. Tiring
- 8 Very very hard. Very tiring
- 9 Exhausted. Out of breath
- 10 Maximum exhausted



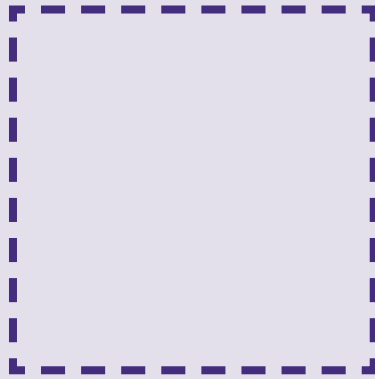
We have included exercises to help you manage breathlessness and the scale above will help you to rate your breathlessness.

BREATHING CONTROL

- Sit down on a comfortable chair in a relaxed position or lie on your side or back
- Place one hand on your stomach
- As you breathe in, feel your stomach move out
- As you breathe out, feel your stomach return to its original position
- Breathe in through your nose (to filter and warm the air)
- Breathe out through your nose
- Try to avoid using muscles around the ribs and neck area

How does it feel? See scale above to assess your levels of breathlessness.

'SQUARE-BREATHING' TECHNIQUE – HELPS TO FOCUS BREATHING



- Focus on a square object or the square above.
- As you breathe in through your nose, follow the line with your finger or eyes.
- When you reach the corner, breathe out through your nose.
- Repeat, focusing on the square.
- Try to avoid using muscles around the ribs and neck area.

How does it feel? See page 5 to assess your levels of breathlessness.

PURSED LIP BREATHING

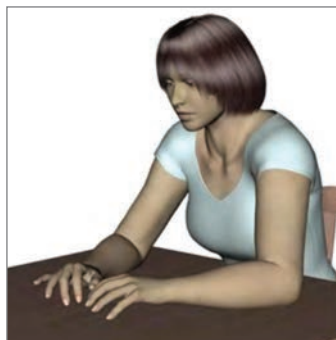
- Breathe in through your nose
- Breathe out with your lips pursed as if you are whistling
- Try to blow out for as long as you feel comfortable

How does it feel? See page 5 to assess your levels of breathlessness.

Positions to help reduce your breathlessness

SITTING

Either try leaning forward (keeping your trunk straight) resting your hands/arms on your knees or on a table or sitting upright.



STANDING

Either try leaning forwards with your hands on your knees or on a support e.g. chair, kitchen worktop or walking stick or leaning back on a wall.



Initially, these strategies can be used to help with breathlessness. In addition, adaptations can be made to your normal routine to help with managing breathlessness. Adaptations include pacing and energy management, including recognition of signs of post-exertional malaise, prioritising what needs to be done as well as supported self-monitoring and management (see fatigue section on page 13).

Coughing up sputum

Sputum is also known as mucus, phlegm, spit and/or secretions. Coughing secretions is a normal symptom of COVID-19 and it is important to clear this to improve your oxygen levels and reduce the risk of further infections.

The Active Cycle of Breathing technique can help to clear secretions:

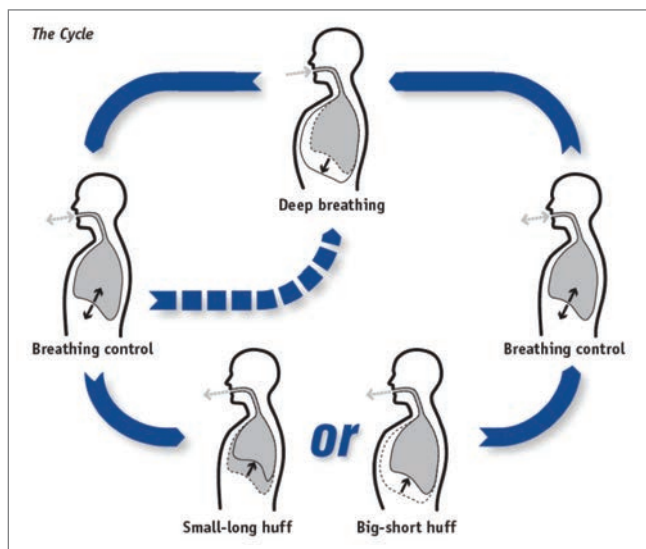


Image taken from Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Respiratory Care (2011)

1. BREATHING CONTROL – see BREATHLESSNESS section (page 5)

2. 3 X DEEP BREATHS

- Sit in a relaxed position and take a long, slow breath in, filling your lungs with air to the bottom of your chest
- Hold the breath for as long as comfortably possible, normally a couple of seconds
- Sniff in through the nose to fill the lungs with a little more air
- Breathe out steadily and normally

3. HUFFING

- Sit in a relaxed position and take in a medium sized breath
- Open your mouth and force the air out, as if you were trying to steam up a mirror

Repeat two to three times; if you hear wet noises in your upper chest, try a cough to see if you can clear any sputum.

You should repeat this cycle, taking care to not to take too many deep breaths as this can make you feel dizzy.

Postural drainage

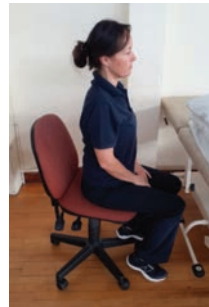
By changing positions frequently and completing the Active Cycle of Breathing, you help to move the secretions which makes it easier to cough them up. Here are the techniques you can use:

LYING ON YOUR BACK



Lie on your back, support your neck with a pillow.

SITTING UPRIGHT



This can be done in a chair or in bed. Use a pillow to support your posture and neck.

SIDE LYING



Lie on your side. Use a pillow to support your neck. Bend your knees slightly.

LYING ON YOUR STOMACH



Lie on your abdomen. Turn your head to one side. Use a pillow for your head. You can cross your arms or place them by your head.

EXERCISE

It is important to introduce rehabilitation and exercise into your recovery as early as deemed clinically appropriate by the multidisciplinary team (MDT) – the range of healthcare professionals looking after you. They will support you to develop a rehabilitation plan based on your individual needs and symptoms.

Starting rehabilitation early can improve physical and mental recovery and prevent future problems.

Setting goals can assist in achieving what matters to you most and looking at your needs and preferences. These goals will be personal to you and agreed through discussions with the health professionals involved in your care.

Typically when exercising you are aiming to feel slightly breathless – use the RPE scale (page 5) to help you. Each person's tolerance is different so it's important that you monitor any increase in symptoms up to 72 hours after an activity to know your own level. You may need to work at a 3 or 5 depending on your own tolerance. As you improve the RPE will reduce which then means you can consider progressing.

Make sure to look out for symptoms of post-exertional malaise (PEM) where symptoms are triggered or made worse by physical, cognitive, mental or emotional exertion. Symptoms can typically worsen 12–48 hours after the activity and last for days or even weeks. If you find you are experiencing symptoms of PEM, contact your GP or the team you are under who can support you to receive more specialist advice.

IF YOU FEEL UNWELL DURING THESE EXERCISES, STOP AND INFORM THE WARD STAFF (IF YOU ARE IN HOSPITAL) OR GP/TEAM THAT IS REVIEWING YOU (IF YOU ARE AT HOME).



Starting rehabilitation early can improve physical and mental recovery and prevent future problems.

WALKING RECORD SHEET

Please keep a record so you can see how you are doing.

Date	Minutes of continuous walking	RPE score
Week 1		
Week 2		
Week 3		
Week 4		

Date	Minutes of continuous walking	RPE score
Week 5		
Week 6		
Week 7		
Week 8		



Here's an example of how you can use your exercise record to write down your activity and any symptoms you experience

Please give as much information as possible regarding symptoms so that, if needed, you can be referred to the appropriate service.

Session/Day	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday		Sunday	
	Sets	Symptoms	Sets	Symptoms	Sets	Symptoms	Sets	Symptoms	Sets	Symptoms	Sets	Symptoms	Sets	Symptoms
Steps	15 reps	Breathless RPE-7 Tired for 3 days												
Walking up the stairs					5 mins	Breathless RPE-5								
Dog walk									30 mins	RPE-5 Tired for 2 days				
Making dinner											45 mins	Aching muscles. Physical and cognitive fatigue next day		

FATIGUE

Everyone is familiar with the feeling of being tired after exercise or a long period of concentration. Despite resting and a good night's sleep, fatigue can be felt after minimal effort, can be prolonged and can limit your ability to take part in daily living activities. Fatigue can leave people feeling like they are unable to concentrate, dull and unable to recall memories.

Fatigue is very common after viral infections such as COVID-19 and this usually settles after 2 or 3 weeks. However, in some people it can carry on for weeks or months.

What can you do if you are experiencing fatigue?

1. Recognise that fatigue is real and be kind to yourself. Take the time to explain to friends, family and colleagues the impact that fatigue is having. Fatigue is invisible and sometimes it can be misunderstood. Until someone experiences fatigue, it is hard to understand the impact and how debilitating it can be.

2. Get a good night's sleep. Fatigue can feel worse if your sleeping pattern is disrupted.

3. Try relaxation techniques. Mindful meditation, aromatherapy, yoga, tai chi, reading, or any other activity which you find relaxing can help with fatigue as they promote good sleep patterns and reduce stress.

How to conserve your energy

The 3 Ps principle (Pace, Plan, Prioritise)

Pace – pacing yourself can help you to have enough energy to complete an activity. You will recover quicker if you work on a task until you are tired rather than exhausted.

- Break up activities into smaller tasks and spread them out throughout the day.
- Have a rest during an activity.
- Plan rest breaks in between activities.
- Sit and rest wherever possible.

Plan – have a think about the activities you usually do on a daily and weekly basis and plan for how you can spread these activities out. If you notice that a certain activity makes you feel breathless or tired, rather than do them all in one go, plan ahead and complete them throughout the day. You could think about changing the time that you would usually complete an activity. For example, if you find showering in the morning leaves you feeling fatigued, try having a shower in the evening before going to bed.

- Gather together all the items you need before you begin a task.
- If you have an Occupational Therapist, speak to them about adapted equipment which is likely to make tasks easier. Ask them about any other support or advice which is available.
- Ask friends or family to help you with activities while they are around to help you.

Prioritise – some activities of daily living are necessary, but others aren't. Ask yourself the following questions to find out which tasks are necessary.

1. What do I need to do today? What do I want to do today?
2. What can be done another day?
3. What can I ask someone else to do for me?

SLEEP

Everybody has a 'biological clock' which is situated in the hypothalamus of the brain. It regulates the rhythms of our body, known as 'circadian rhythms'. One of the rhythms that it is heavily involved in regulating is the sleep and wake cycle. The biological clock runs on approximately a 24-hour cycle. It resets daily and takes cues from the environment, such as the time of day, how light it is and our daily routines. However, this can become out of sync and cause problematic symptoms including poor quality sleep, feeling generally unwell, increased fatigue levels, low mood, muscle aches, headaches, poor concentration and forgetfulness.



TIPS TO IMPROVE SLEEP

- Getting into a regular bedtime routine is the number one most effective and important thing you can do to help your body and achieve better quality sleep.
- Try to go to bed and get out of bed at the same time every day, even at weekends. It is often easier to try to change the getting up time first.
- Aim to allow 7–9 hours of sleep opportunity depending on your individual need.
- Set an alarm, and force yourself to wake, and get up.
- Go to bed when you feel sleepy in the evenings and continue to wake at the regular time in the morning. If you persist with this, eventually your body will fall into this routine too.
- Within the principles of pacing, getting some gentle exercise will promote a restful nights' sleep. This can include gentle yoga or stretching.
- Lastly, maintaining a good sleep environment can be helpful. Implementing bedtime rituals and creating a calm environment to associate with sleep can be done through journalling or practicing mindfulness. The goal is to focus on relaxation and not on forcing sleep.

TO ENSURE GOOD QUALITY SLEEP, TRY THE FOLLOWING

- Avoid napping during the day, as this can cause you to have to readjust to your day and can make you feel worse than you did prior to the nap. (However, if you feel better for having a nap and you are sleeping well at night this might be beneficial.)
- Avoid television or white light in the bedroom. Exposure to this light has been shown to suppress the production of melatonin, which is a hormone involved in the regulation of the sleep and wake cycle. Try to reduce bright/white light for 1-2 hours prior to your bedtime.
- Try exposing yourself to natural light and fresh air in the morning as this helps to release melatonin in the body.
- Try to reduce nicotine, alcohol and caffeine consumption as they can affect the quality of your sleep.
- Avoid eating late at night or going to bed hungry as digestion has a large role to play in wakefulness or restlessness.

RESOURCES TO IMPROVE SLEEP

My sleep diary

Try keeping a sleep diary which records different aspects of your sleep. This allows you to notice any patterns relating to your sleep hygiene.

What time did you go to bed?

How long did it take for you to fall asleep?

After falling asleep, how many times did you wake during the night?

What time did you get up?

How fatigued were you once awake on a scale of 1–10?

My worry log

If you find yourself having anxious thoughts throughout the day, write them down and come back to them during a specific hour of the day. This allows you to set a time to worry rather than focusing on it throughout the whole day.

PSYCHOLOGICAL RECOVERY FROM COVID-19

People who are recovering from COVID-19 or any critical illness are likely to experience a wide range of emotional states. These could include shock, anxiety, sadness, anger, helplessness, confusion and many more.

Some people who overcome critical illness may even become elevated in mood because they feel so “lucky to be alive” and may become tempted to overdo things and push themselves too far and too soon.

Some people describe having had a “rollercoaster” of feelings and are surprised that this can continue for a while after they get home. These feelings may change rapidly or seem to stick around and be hard to shake off. Emotions may be closer to the surface and you may be more sensitive than you were before i.e. you may get tearful watching sad films.

No single person will react in the same way and it is important to tell yourself that how you feel right now is normal and understandable as you have just had a very frightening and traumatic time.

Emotional distress around COVID-19 is not a mental illness; it is an understandable and common human experience.

Common reactions

DELIRIUM

Some people can experience delirium whilst critically ill. This can be very frightening and confusing at the time. Symptoms include not knowing where you are, confusion, seeing or hearing things that are not real and fear that others are trying to harm you. It can help afterwards to know that this is a common experience and talking about it can really help.

RESPONSE TO TRAUMA

It is quite normal to have nightmares, flashbacks, sleep issues and problems with thinking, memory and attention. Memories of receiving oxygen may trigger distress. Reminders of being in hospital such as further appointments or seeing COVID-19 on the news can also trigger upsetting feelings. You may also be generally jumpy and irritable.

ANXIETY

You may experience common symptoms of anxiety including difficulty relaxing, fast heart rate, sweating, shortness of breath, racing thoughts, tense muscles, etc. You may also feel more anxious when you are alone. Though frightening, anxiety cannot harm you.

Your mind will be more ‘tuned-in’ to bodily symptoms. You may worry more about further illness for some time. At first, you may need extra reassurance from loved ones and/or your doctor and this is understandable and okay.

LOW MOOD/MOTIVATION

It will take time to come to terms with what has happened. You may also be physically weaker and experience fatigue and breathlessness for some time. Having been unable to have visitors may have been incredibly upsetting, as well as fears you may not survive. The outside world feels very different right now and we are living in uncertain times. Routines and usual activities have changed and some of these things may be temporarily lost altogether. Any one or all of these things can contribute to low mood and lack of motivation.

HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF?

It may be tempting to push away thoughts about what happened or avoid talking about it at all times. Whilst it is good not to spend lots of time focusing on it, try not to push thoughts away completely. It can help to talk about your experience or even write about it.

SELF-COMPASSION

- Be kind to yourself – you are doing your best in a very difficult time.
- It will take time to recover emotionally as well as physically.
- Expectations of ourselves are often too high – try to lower them.
- Do not put pressure on yourself to do things too soon.
- Note your achievements each day; no matter how small.
- If you feel like crying, don't prevent yourself from doing so. This is a normal way to release your feelings and is not a sign of weakness.

ROUTINE

Plan activities each day that give you a sense of:

- ✓ Pleasure
- ✓ Achievement
- ✓ Connection
- ✓ Physical activity

STAY CONNECTED

It is crucial to our wellbeing that we stay safely connected to loved ones e.g. regular telephone calls, messages and video calls.

SELF-CARE

- Focus on what you CAN control
- Make time for relaxation
- Keep a good sleep routine and eat a healthy diet
- Make time just for yourself to do things you enjoy
- Get outside in the garden (or an outdoor space nearby) as often as you can
- Learn to accept help from others if it is needed
- Adjust and pace your activities to avoid 'boom and bust'
- Consider energy conservation and pacing activities

BRIEF MINDFULNESS: TAKE TEN BREATHS

Practice it throughout the day, especially any time you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

- Take ten slow breaths that go low down into your abdomen. Focus on breathing in and out quietly and gently, ideally through you nose. Start by breathing out, letting the air fully leave your body, then let your lungs refill slowly and naturally.
- Notice the sensations of your breathing; feel the air moving over your top lip and your abdomen and chest wall move gently with each slow, steady breath.
- See if you can let your thoughts come and go, as if they are just passing cars, driving past your house.
- Expand your awareness: notice your breathing and your body at the same time. Then also look around the room and notice what you can see, hear, touch, and feel.

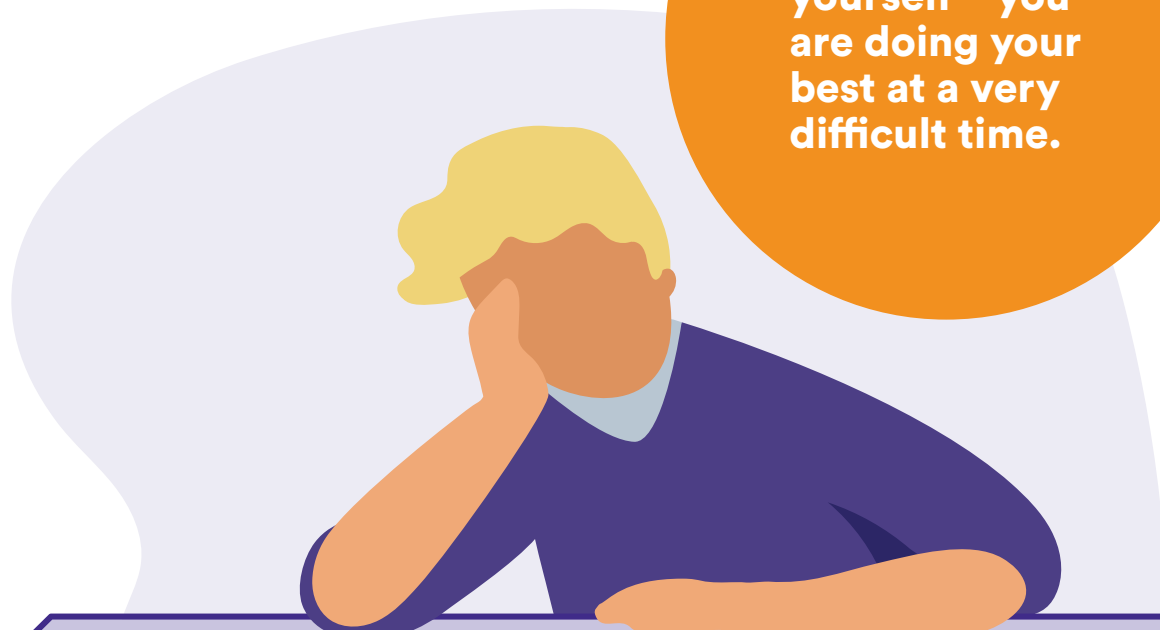
Adapted from Russ Harris (2009) ACT Made Simple

IMPORTANT

If emotional difficulties continue beyond three months after discharge, or they adversely affect your daily life at any point, do not hesitate to contact your GP for further advice and support.

If you are having ongoing difficulties with low mood or anxiety, or if you continue to experience the symptoms of trauma beyond three months, you may be able to access support through **My WellBeing College**: <https://mywellbeingcollege.nhs.uk>
Tel: 0300 555 5551

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis you can contact **First Response**:
Tel: 01274 221181 – available 24 hours a day / 7 days a week.



Be kind to yourself – you are doing your best at a very difficult time.

EATING, DRINKING AND SWALLOWING RECOVERY FOLLOWING COVID-19

You may have been able to eat and drink as you wished while you were in hospital. However, some individuals who have had COVID-19 experience difficulties eating, drinking and swallowing and need extra support. A speech and language therapist can help advise you on how to eat and drink safely.

If you have had an ICU stay you may experience dysphonia (voice difficulties), cognitive communication, chronic upper airway and respiratory problems. Patients discharged from critical care often present with profound muscle weakness as a result of significant loss of muscle mass and disuse atrophy (a type of muscle wasting due to lack of activity) during critical illness. This can have an impact on swallowing and voice.

Patients with severe COVID-19 may have undergone a tracheostomy. A tracheostomy is an opening created at the front of the neck so a tube can be inserted into the windpipe (trachea) to help you breathe. A tracheostomy can have implications for speech, swallowing and voice. Symptoms may include the following:

- Changes to voice such as difficulty being heard, altered quality of the voice, your voice tiring by the end of the day or an inability to alter the pitch of your voice.
- Difficulties eating, drinking or swallowing such as coughing, choking or avoiding any food or drinks.
- Change in the way you communicate with people, such as making sense of things people say to you, putting thoughts or feelings into words, difficulty reading or having a conversation.
- Changes in the sensitivity of your throat such as a troublesome cough or noisy breathing.

TIPS TO HELP YOU WHEN 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, more frequent meals.
- Small bites or sips are easier to control.
- Softer foods may be easier to chew and swallow.
- Eat food you enjoy.

When to seek advice from your GP or healthcare professional

Seek professional advice if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- **Coughing or choking during eating and/or drinking**
- **Wet/gurgly voice**
- **New episodes of chest infections**

Please be aware that fatigue symptoms may also impact the safety of your swallowing. Ensure all diet and fluid intake is taken at a time when you are awake, fully alert and able to safely eat and drink.

If you feel fatigue is impacting on your swallowing, please discuss this with your GP. Speech and language therapists can advise you on managing your eating and drinking difficulties relating to fatigue, however please discuss with your GP how you can manage fatigue symptoms.

Mouth care

Some people may experience altered taste, bad breath, dry mouth or a build up of saliva in their mouths. It is important to try and keep your mouth clean and moist to reduce the risk of 'bugs' inside your mouth from being swallowed into the body.

- Brush your teeth twice a day with toothpaste.
- Have frequent sips of water or non-caffeinated drinks.
- Use moisturising lip balm to prevent lips from getting cracked and sore.
- Try sucking on fruit sweets, mints or chewing gum to stimulate saliva.



COGNITION AND COMMUNICATION

Being able to communicate effectively is important to us as individuals. What we mean by communication is the ability to think of the words and say them as we want. Some people may find this difficult during recovery, especially as demands increase.

What problems may I experience?

- Difficulty understanding what people are saying
- Difficulty reading
- Difficulty finding the right words to say
- Difficulty holding a conversation

You may only experience these difficulties when you are tired, or in certain environments.

ADVICE

- **Have conversations in quiet environments.**
- **Have important conversations when you feel rested.**
- **If you have not understood what someone has said, ask them to write down key points.**



IMPROVING YOUR NUTRITION

COVID-19 can cause changes to taste and smell, alongside the symptoms already covered in this booklet. This can affect your appetite and ability to eat, making it difficult to get the nutrition you need.

If you do have these symptoms and/or are finding you are losing weight, have a poor appetite or feel that your muscles are weaker, you may need to think about the types of food you are eating.

It is important to be aware of your weight and appetite, as losing weight without trying can be detrimental to your health and could be due to loss of muscle weight rather than fat. The following information gives advice to help you with this, however if you continue to lose weight without trying or struggle to eat please contact your GP who can refer you to a dietitian for additional support. It is important that you ask your GP for your full bloods including Vitamin D and Ferritin levels.

RESOURCES

If you have maintained your weight during your illness and have a good appetite, you can access information about eating well at:

www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/COVID19green.pdf

You can access information with tips about improving your nutrition and increasing your weight at: www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/COVID19yellow.pdf

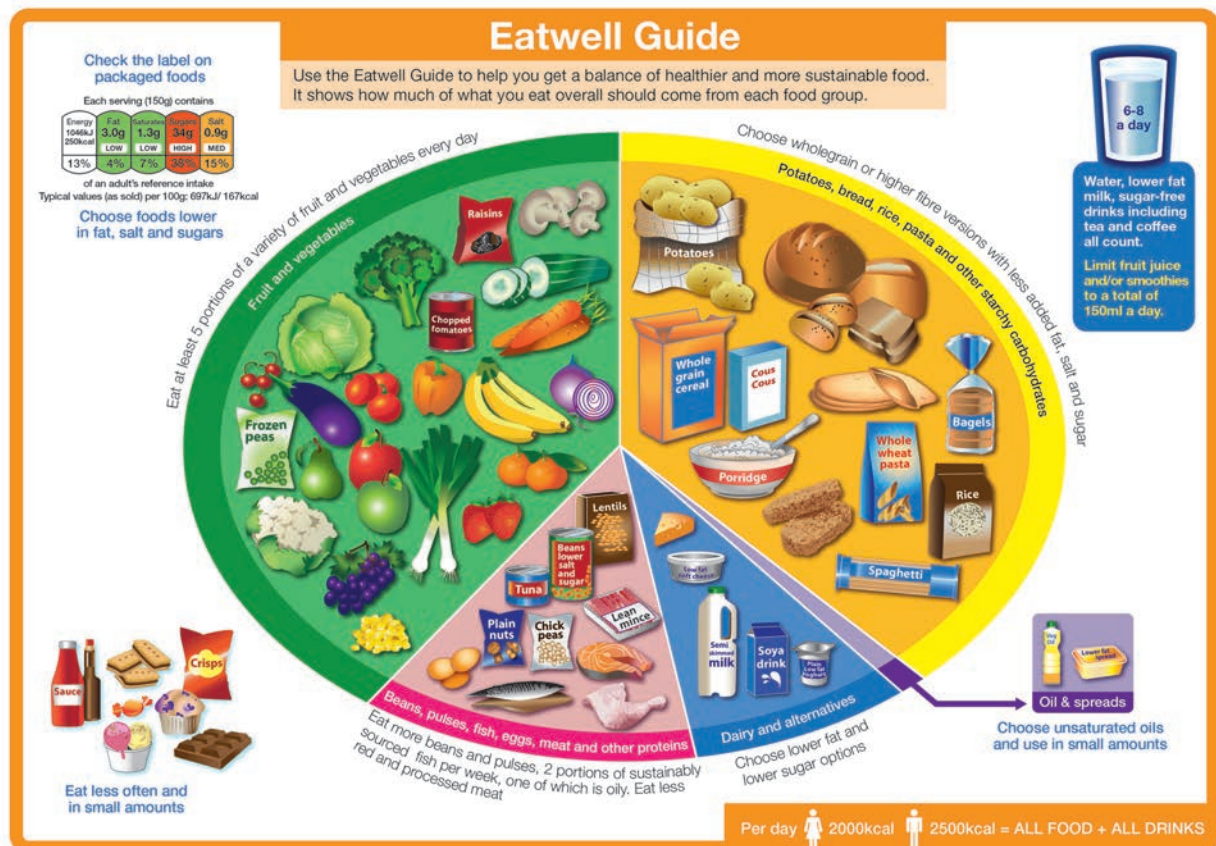
Monitor your progress

- If you can, monitor your weight by weighing yourself once a week.
- Use the self screening tool www.malnutritionselfscreening.org to monitor weight changes.
- If you are unable to weigh yourself, look for other signs of weight loss (for example loose fitting jewellery and clothes).
- Think about your energy levels. Is it harder for you to get up the stairs? Are you unable to walk as far as you could before?

It is important to be aware of your weight and appetite, as losing weight without trying can be detrimental to your health and could be due to loss of muscle weight rather than fat.

What you need for a balanced diet

Nutrient and function	This comes from
Protein – builds healthy muscles, organs and maintains a healthy immune system	Meat, fish, eggs, beans, pulses, tofu and dairy products
Carbohydrates – provide the body with energy and fibre	Potatoes, bread, pasta, rice, and cereals
Fruits and vegetables – provide a source of fibre, vitamins and minerals to support the immune and digestive systems	Fresh, frozen or canned fruit and vegetables. 1 tablespoon of dried fruit per day counts as one portion, limit to one dried fruit portion per day.
Dairy – provides calcium and other important minerals for healthy bones and teeth	Dairy products such as milk, yogurt, cheese, cream and fromage frais. Non-dairy alternatives are also available with added calcium.
Fluid – essential for every cell in the body	Water, milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count. Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland © Crown copyright 2016

You can ask your GP practice to consider referring you to a dietitian for support if you are worried about losing weight. A dietitian can give you specialist advice tailored to your needs.

RETURNING TO NORMAL FUNCTION

During your recovery from COVID-19 you may find yourself experiencing functional challenges, for example being unable to get washed and dressed independently or make meals independently. Experts in holistic rehabilitation, **occupational therapists** have a vital role to play in addressing the debilitating effects of COVID-19. By offering a personalised and occupation-focused approach to care they can support your recovery from the virus and its treatment.

ENVIRONMENT

Your environment will have an impact on each stage of your rehabilitation, supporting or hindering your performance or ability to participate. Occupational therapists will consider how you can adapt to the physical environment and how the environment may be modified, but the social environment is very important in this context with barriers such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and ongoing social isolation.

OCCUPATION

Working with you and, when appropriate, your family members and carers, occupational therapists support you to identify valued occupations, establish goals and take part in activities that help with your recovery and rehabilitation of daily living skills. For people who have received intensive treatment for COVID-19, this will inevitably start with personal care, but supporting you to achieve an occupational balance throughout your stages of recovery will support motivation and wellbeing.

RETURNING TO WORK

Going back to work (voluntary or paid) after illness can be challenging. Persisting symptoms such as shortness of breath, fatigue, poor concentration and anxiety can all contribute to returning to work difficulties.



People will feel able return to work at different times based on your recovery and what your job is. Try not to rush back into work; people who return to work too early can end up having to take time off sick again. This can then have a knock on effect on your confidence and self-esteem. In conversation with your manager, a phased return may work best for you and this can be planned between your manager and, if you have one, an occupational health department. The 3 Ps principle discussed in the fatigue section can also be applied to help you when you return to work.



HOW AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST CAN HELP

- Early rehabilitation to promote mobility and function.
- Work with you to set functionally specific goals.
- Assess your current ability and provide advice, education and equipment, if required, to maximise your independence.
- Activity analysis and grading of tasks to support gradual regaining of function for people with limited exercise and activity tolerance.
- Advice on management of breathlessness and fatigue. Consider grading and pacing of tasks and teach energy conservation strategies.
- Facilitate autonomy and control through adaptation of bed controls and engagement in routine, timetabling and goal setting.
- Management strategies for anxiety symptoms, including referral to appropriate psychological services in liaison with MDT.
- Consideration of low mood and strategies to improve mood, including timetabling and engagement in enjoyable activities.

If you feel you are struggling with your functional tasks, you are fatiguing easily throughout the day, or you have struggled more than you anticipated when returning home please contact your GP who can refer you to community occupational therapy.

SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL ISSUES

The impact of long COVID on non-clinical areas, for example financial worries and help with benefits, can be difficult to deal with.

Your GP practice will be able to give you information on local services that can support and guide you through these often complex discussions.

WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE ONGOING NEEDS?

Sometimes people have ongoing needs for longer than 12 weeks. This is called 'post COVID syndrome' or 'long COVID'.

This can be normal following COVID-19 and there are services that can help.

If you still have ongoing needs despite the advice in this booklet, please return to your GP who will consider a referral to the post COVID syndrome assessment pathway.

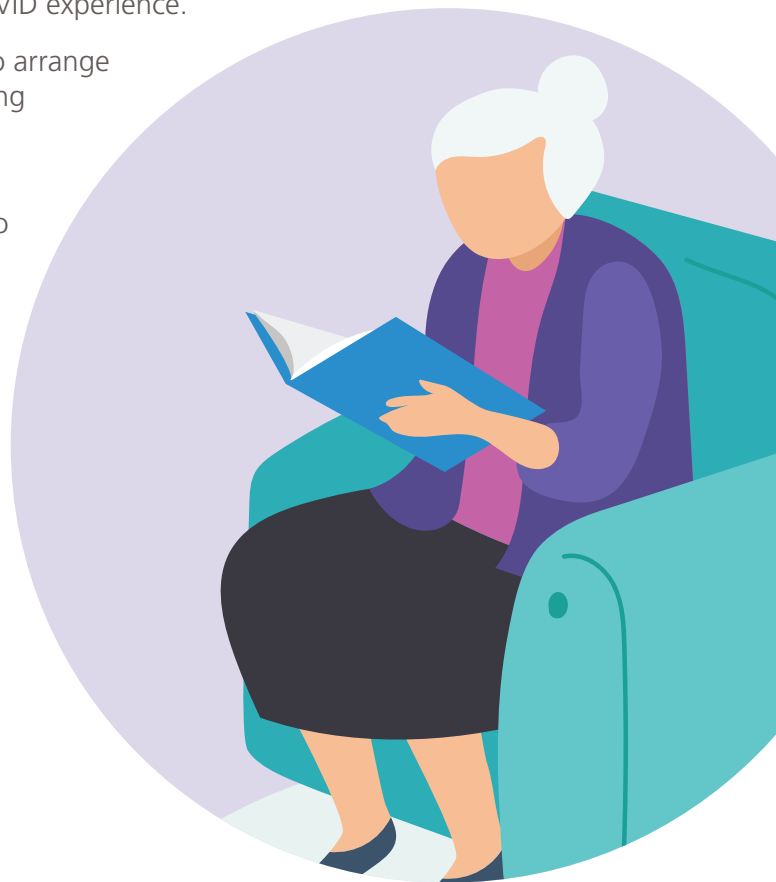
Once referred, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire about your ongoing symptoms and how they are affecting you.

Once completed the rehabilitation coordinator will contact you to discuss your answers and learn about your COVID experience.

From this the coordinator will work with you to arrange the appropriate services to support your ongoing recovery.

Your progress will be monitored via the questionnaire that you completed on referral to this service and through the team(s) supporting your rehabilitation.

As well as existing services, the coordinator also has access to a multidisciplinary team of specialists in COVID-19 rehabilitation that meet weekly to discuss more complex cases.



USEFUL RESOURCES

GENERAL

NHS – Your COVID recovery
www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk

RESPIRATORY

Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Respiratory Care – resources to help with shortness of breath, energy conservation, chest clearance using ACBT
www.acprc.org.uk

British Lung Foundation
www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/long-covid

Cardio-Respiratory Physiotherapy
www.youtube.com/channel/UCIG6gd-3C8WzLQkr_ATal-Q/playlists

Physiotherapy for Breathing Pattern Disorders
www.physiotherapyforbpd.org.uk

EXERCISE

NHS – Your COVID recovery
www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/your-wellbeing/getting-moving-again

WELLBEING

NHS Every Mind Matters
www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

NHS mental wellbeing audio guides
www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/mental-wellbeing-audio-guides

29k – Seek happiness, find meaning. A free app with courses and meditations
<https://29k.org>

ACAS
www.acas.org.uk/advice

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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