

# COVID-19



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## RECOVERY INFORMATION BOOKLET



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## **What is Covid-19 and What Symptoms Should I Expect?**

COVID-19 is a highly contagious virus that mainly attacks the lungs. It is transmitted through droplets created from sneezing and coughing from those infected. The virus enters the body via the nose, mouth and eyes.

**The most commonly reported symptoms of COVID-19 are:**

- A new cough
- A fever
- Loss or change to sense of taste or smell or loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches
- Shortness of breath when moving around
- Sputum production
- Gastrointestinal problems

Some people may require hospitalisation to treat these symptoms.

**The severity and duration of symptoms for people who have COVID-19 can vary.**

For most people, symptoms last 7-14 days and will be very mild.

**To manage mild symptoms:**

- Stay hydrated
- Take paracetamol if you have a temperature
- Rest
- Get up and move about at regular intervals

What do I do if my symptoms get worse?

**Monitor your symptoms regularly. If you get one of the following:**

- Worsening shortness of breath
- A new or returning fever
- Worsening ability to concentrate
- Chest pain

Please contact your GP to discuss these symptoms further.

## **How might I feel after having COVID 19?**

You may find that your symptoms last for weeks or possibly months, especially if you have been in hospital or had severe COVID-19 symptoms. This pack contains information on how to manage the following symptoms:

- Severe fatigue
- Ongoing breathlessness
- Muscle weakness
- Post viral cough
- Difficulties with memory/confusion

This might make it more difficult to do the things you are normally able to do, such as housework, having a wash, getting dressed or walking up and down the stairs.

### *How are you feeling?*

As well as the physical symptoms listed above, it is very common to experience feelings of anxiety and low mood. Some people who have had treatment in hospital may also experience anxiety or unpleasant memories about their stay. For further support, please see page 22-26.

## **To improve your breathing**

Every day our lungs produce 100mls of fluid called sputum. Sputum traps the dirt particles that we breathe in. This is normally coughed and cleared during the day to clear the lungs. Patients who are unwell and weak sometimes find it difficult to cough and clear the daily sputum load.

This is made worse if patients have pneumonia or a chest infection, as more sputum is produced. One of the best ways to help clear sputum is to stay active even if this only sitting upright in a chair and walking for 2 -3 minutes every hour. This encourages deep breathing and coughing.

## **Tips for relief of breathlessness**

After an illness which affects the lungs, many people often feel short of breath. Every day activities such as getting dressed, walking or doing jobs around the house can make you feel breathless. This can cause fear and panic.

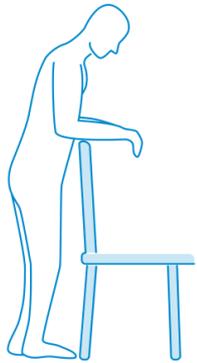
Try the following to help ease your symptoms:

1. Stop (speaking and moving). Give yourself time to recover your breath
2. Positioning: choose a position which will make it easier for you to breathe (examples on page 4)
3. Relax or distract (It may help to focus on a picture, a view from the window)
4. Breathing techniques ( outlined on page 5 and 6)

## Positions to Manage Breathlessness

Following COVID-19 you may find you have continued breathlessness. You should monitor this and if it gets worse seek review from your GP.

These positions can help ease your breathlessness and can be used when resting or when mobilising.



Forward lean standing



Forward lean sitting



Backward lean standing



Relaxed sitting



High Side Lying

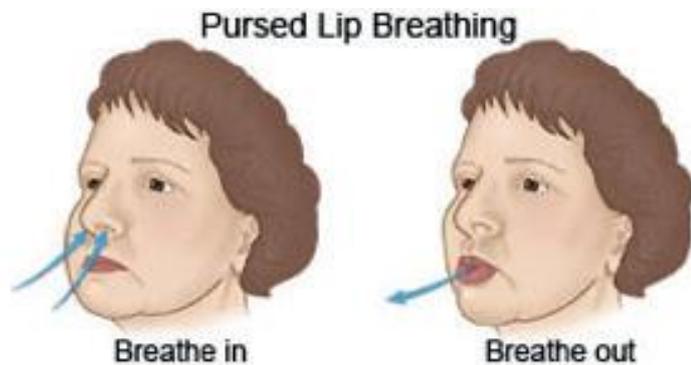
Graphics: British Lung Foundation  
<https://www.blf.org.uk/>

## Exercises to Help Manage Breathing

Breathing exercises can help you manage your breathlessness and reduce its impact on your everyday activities.

### Breathing control

- Take a slow breath in through your nose
- Try to relax your shoulders and neck
- Allow the air to fill up from the bottom of your lungs to the top of your chest
- Breathe gently out through pursed lips (as if you were going to blow out a candle) to create space for the next breath in



Make sure you have good air circulation in the room by opening a window or door.

Keep cool- Use a wet flannel to cool the area around your nose and mouth this can help reduce the sensation of breathlessness.

### Breathing control while walking

This will help you walk on the flat, climb stairs and negotiate slopes. Try to keep your shoulders and upper chest relaxed and use your breathing control. Time your breathing with your stepping.

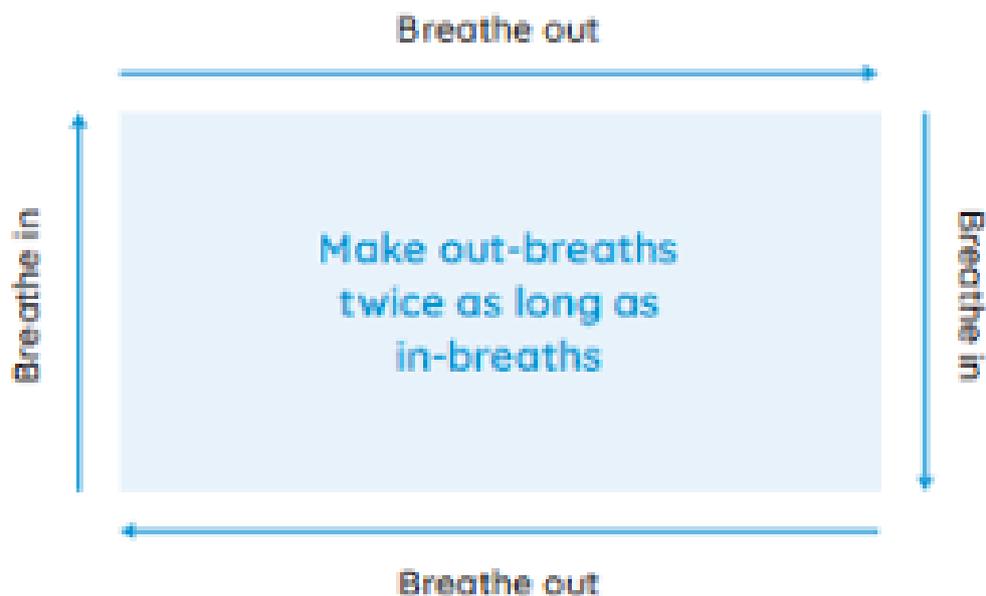
- Breathe in – 1 step
- Breathe out – 1 or 2 steps

## Breathe a rectangle

Find a comfortable position.

Look for a rectangle shape in the room e.g. a window, door or TV screen.

Move around the sides of the rectangle with your eyes, breathing in on the short sides and out on the long sides.



## Managing your cough

A dry cough is one of the most commonly reported symptoms for COVID-19 however in some cases it may be productive of phlegm.

Strategies to manage a dry cough

- Stay well hydrated
- Sipping a soft drink – take small sips, one after the other, avoid taking large sips
- Steam inhalation – pour hot water into a bowl, put your head over the bowl and keep your head a comfortable distance from the water. If comfortable, cover your head and bowl with a towel
- Drink warm honey and lemon or another warm drink, this can help to soothe the throat
- If you do not have a drink to hand, but need to cough, try swallowing repeatedly. This can work in a similar way to sipping water

## Strategies to manage a productive cough

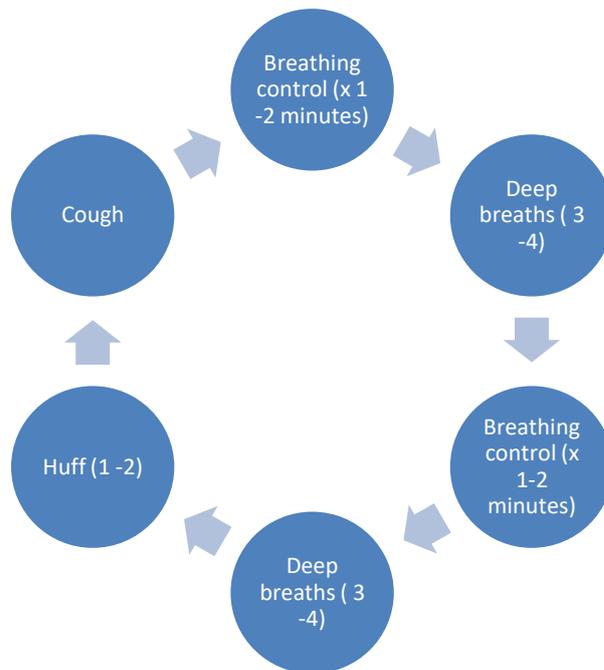
- Keep well hydrated
- Steam inhalation
- Try lying on either side as outlined on page 8. This can help drain the phlegm
- Try moving around; this will help to move the phlegm so you can cough it out

## Exercises to help clear your chest

Following COVID-19 you may find that you have a productive cough and mucus on your chest.

These exercises and positions can help you clear your chest. These may be recommended by your physiotherapist or nurse following COVID-19.

**Active Cycle of Breathing Technique (ACBT)** exercise consists of three breathing exercises that together help to clear the mucus off your chest.



**Breathing control ‘Belly Breathing.’** This is gentle normal breathing using your stomach. Keep your shoulders relaxed. Place your hands on your stomach. As you breathe in you should feel your hands rise and as you breathe out your hands should fall. Your breathing should be slow and steady. Practice for 1 – 2 minutes.

**Deep breaths** Focus on taking a slow gentle deeper breath in your nose. If you can hold your breath for 1-3 seconds, followed by a gentle relaxed breath out through your mouth.

**Huff** Take a medium breath in. Keep your mouth open and and huff all the air out of your lungs – (imagine steaming up a mirror with force). Use breathing control between huffs to avoid getting breathless. This will help move the phlegm into the upper airways.

**Cough** Try a big strong cough if you think you have phlegm on your chest to clear. If this is painful, try hugging a pillow tightly when coughing.

### How often and how long?

- Continue to do until you feel your chest is clearer
- Clear as much mucus as you can without becoming exhausted
- Perform for at least 10 minutes, but no longer than 30 minutes
- If productive 2-3 times per day

## Positions to help keep your chest clear

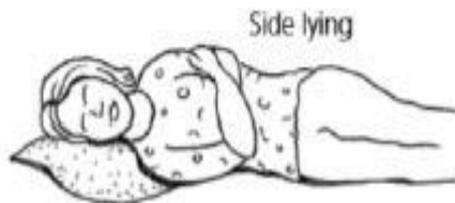
Use the following positions, along with the Active Cycle of Breathing technique to help clear your chest.

However:

- Don't use immediately before or after a meal
- Stop if you have any side effects
- Chose the position below that you feel would best drain your lungs, you can do this in discussion with a health care professional.

### To drain the upper lobes

- Sit comfortably in an upright position. If you are breathless, you may be unable to tolerate these 'head down' positions, so the following may be used:



### To drain the lower lobes –

- Lie on your right lobe side with two or three pillows under your hips:



### To drain the middle lobes –

- Lie on your right lobe side with one to two pillows under your hips:



### Do not do this if you have:

- Nausea
- Acid Reflux
- Become significantly breathless
- Have blood in your phlegm
- Have a recent chest, spine or rib injury
- Feel wheezy

If you have any of the above, please speak with a health care professional before doing this.

## Fatigue and Pain Management

You are likely to find that your energy levels fluctuate from day to day.

Walking around your home might be difficult, including managing the stairs, accessing toileting facilities and managing your daily routine.

This may result in you needing to adapt the activities that you do to enable you to conserve your energy.

Imagine your energy in terms of having a “jug of energy”. Some activities will top up the energy in your jug and other activities will use up the energy in your jug. What would you like to use energy on? Try to keep 20% of your energy in your jug at all times.

Notice times when the pain or fatigue feels better or worse, whether there are any patterns, would pacing yourself have helped?

Plan to engage in activities for periods of time that are okay and stop before your body makes you stop (due to pain or fatigue).

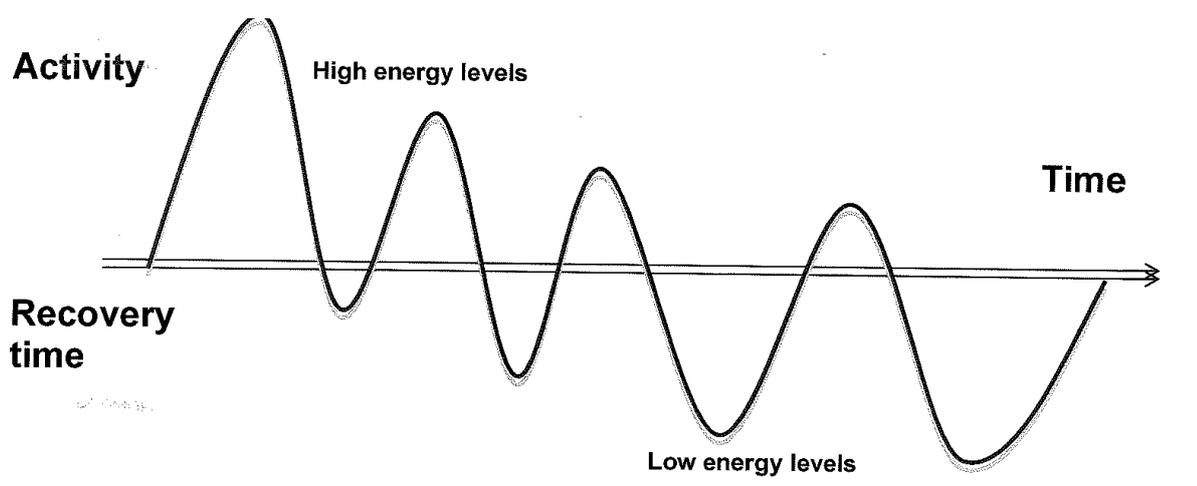
Reducing background distractions will help with mental fatigue

### Monitoring your energy

It is useful to keep track of your daily and weekly activities and monitor how you are feeling at different times. This might enable you to see if there are any patterns and if there are any times of the day/week which are better or worse for you.

It can be helpful to note down what activities give you energy “energy giver” and what activities drain your energy “energy depleters” and see how many of these activities you do daily or weekly. This may also help you to make changes that help manage your energy.

Try to avoid all or nothing or “boom and bust” patterns of activity. Overdoing it leads the body to require more energy. Try to hold back on a good day to enable you to do more on a less good day.



## **Planning**

Consider what times of the day are best for you and plan activities around this time. Try to space activities out during the week and not concentrate all activities into a day.

- Think about the steps that need to be completed and items required for the task
- Prepare the required items ahead of time
- Keep frequently used items in easily accessible places

## **Pacing**

Once activities are planned, pacing allows individuals to sustain energy levels until the task is completed.

Consider the following:

- Allow plenty of time to complete activities and incorporate frequent rests
- Perform tasks at a moderate rate and avoid rushing. Although a task may be completed in less time, rushing utilises more energy and leaves less 'in the bank' for later activities
- Allow plenty of time for rest and relaxation. Take a morning or afternoon nap prior to activities or outings to build up energy
- Breathe easily and properly during activities. Using these techniques helps decrease shortness of breath
- Rethink activities with rest in mind. For example, sit instead of stand while folding clothes or preparing food

## **Prioritising**

When you have a fixed amount of energy to use, it is worth having a think about which activities are most important to you. Sometimes it can help to write everything down that you would like or need to do. Then think about whether these activities are high, medium or low priority for you. When planning what activities you are going to do, concentrate on the high priority things first and then work your way through the medium priority activities. It might be that you don't get round to doing the low priority activities or ask someone else to do these.

Consider the following:

- Can a friend or family member assist with chores e.g. emptying the rubbish, vacuuming so you have more energy for necessary and pleasurable tasks?
- Eliminate unnecessary tasks, chores or steps of an activity. Look for shortcuts and loosen the rules
- Be flexible in daily routines so you can enjoy activities you would otherwise miss because of fatigue

## **Positioning**

Try to avoid too much bending and twisting which can be tiring. Don't sit or stand in the same position for too long without changing your position. Think about trying to organise your home so that things are easily accessible (for example in the kitchen, have frequently used items to hand). It is less effort to push, pull or slide objects so try to avoid carrying heavy things.

Consider the following:

- Storing items at a convenient height to avoid excessive and prolonged stooping and stretching
- Make sure all work surfaces are at the correct height. If a counter is too short, slouching and bending can occur which results in more energy expenditure
- Use long-handled devices such as reachers or telescope cleaning tools to avoid unnecessary bending and reaching
- Facilitate bathing - use a shower seat and a hand-held shower head

## **Sampling Mindfulness Practices and Activities**

### **Body & Breath Meditation**

Try to do a Body & Breath Meditation once every day e.g. YouTube Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQHUvpC8L40&t=8s>

### **7/11 Breathing**

Try to practice 7/11 Breathing exercise every day and whenever you feel stressed, angry, and anxious or overloaded: simply breathe in to the count of 7 and out to the count of 11 (or whatever numbers work for you). Do this for about 10 full breaths.

### **Habit Releaser**

**Changing your chair:** Try to do this habit releaser 6 out of 7 days in the next week

Make a deliberate choice to move from the chair you normally sit in at home, work, and café.

Notice what you experience over the week when you make this change.

### **Mindful Walk**

Take a 5 to 10 minute walk and bring your full attention to it through your senses- what you see, hear, smell, taste and touch.

### **Balance Nourishing & Depleting Activities**

Try to increase nourishing activities (i.e. things that make you feel good and give you energy) and reduce or try to better manage depleting activities each day (i.e. things that drain your energy).

## **Relaxation Techniques**

Relaxation is an important part of energy conservation. It can also help you to control your anxiety, improve quality of life and reduce pain and discomfort. Below are two relaxation techniques you can use to manage anxiety and help you relax.

Grounding technique for when you feel anxious

Take a few slow breaths and ask yourself:

- What are five things I can see?
- What are four things I can feel?
- What are three things I can hear?
- What are two things I can smell?
- What is one thing I can taste?

Think of these answers to yourself slowly, one sense at a time spending at least 10 seconds focusing on each sense.

Picture yourself somewhere calm

Think of somewhere relaxing and peaceful. It could be a memory of somewhere you've been or a made up place.

Close your eyes, and think about the details of this place.

- What does it look like?
- What colours and shapes can you see?
- Can you hear any sounds?
- Is it warm or cool?
- What does the ground feel like?

Spend some time imagining each of these.

## Physical Activity Advice Following COVID-19

Being ill at home with COVID-19 can result in a significant reduction in muscle strength, particularly in your legs.

This can be for a number of reasons, but mainly due to inactivity. It's not harmful to get out of breath when doing physical activity, this is a normal response.

However if you are too breathless to speak, slow down until your breathing improves. Try not to get so breathless that you have to stop immediately, remember to pace your activities.

You might have been given exercises in the community by a physiotherapist. Make sure you keep doing these regularly however if you are unsure, contact the prescribing therapist.

Do not overdo it; try to increase your activity levels slowly.

### Exercise Intensity and BORG RPE SCALE

One way to monitor your physical activity progress is to measure the amount of effort it takes to do an activity. Over time, the amount of effort it takes should decrease. Once you've reached this point, you can gradually move on to more challenging activities.

The Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale will help you estimate how hard you're working (your activity intensity). Perceived exertion is how hard you think your body is exercising. Ratings on this scale are related to heart rate (how hard your heart is working to move blood through your body).

Rating of Perceived Exertion Borg RPE Scale		
6	No exertion-sitting & resting	How you feel when lying in bed or sitting on a chair. Little or no effort
7	Extremely light	
8		
9	Very light	Notice breathing slightly deeper but still comfortable. Conversation possible.
10		
11	Light	
12		This is the target range. Notice breathing more difficult and more difficult to hold a conversation but remains manageable.
13	Somewhat hard	
14		
15	Hard	
16		Deep and forceful breathing don't want to talk. Hardest work you have ever done.
17	Very hard	
18		
19	Extremely hard	
20	Maximal exertion	Don't work this hard

### Exercise Diary – Record Activity and Duration x 8 weeks

Record the type of activity you do and for how long i.e. Monday week 1-sitting exercises; 10 minutes or 5 minutes walking

	<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Week 4</b>
<b>Monday</b>				
<b>Tuesday</b>				
<b>Wednesday</b>				
<b>Thursday</b>				
<b>Friday</b>				
<b>Saturday</b>				
<b>Sunday</b>				

	<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Week 8</b>
<b>Monday</b>				
<b>Tuesday</b>				
<b>Wednesday</b>				
<b>Thursday</b>				
<b>Friday</b>				
<b>Saturday</b>				
<b>Sunday</b>				

## **Exercises**

In the following sections, we have included sitting and standing exercises which gradually increase the amount of effort required to perform them. This helps you to gently progress your recovery as you feel able, however, you can start at the level that feels right for you.

We have also included exercises to help improve your low back and torso muscle strength which are known as core stability exercises.

We recommend that you aim to work up to 8 to 10 repetitions and three sets of each exercise. Which means try and complete the exercise 8 times. Rest and then repeat this up to three times.

## **General Exercise Disclaimer**

You should understand that when participating in any exercise or exercise program, there is the possibility of physical injury.

If you engage in this exercise program, you agree that you do so at your own risk, are voluntarily participating in these activities, assume all risk of injury to yourself.

## Exercises While Sitting

This section will take you through exercises to complete whilst sitting on a chair. Aim to sit in a sturdy chair with a supported back and with your hips and knees to 90 degrees where possible.

Equipment you might need: Small weights (aim for 1-2kgs in total to start) or if you don't have any weights use a tin can!

Note: please use your weights with caution, start low and gradually increase your weight as you feel stronger. You can also complete these exercises without a weight if you are having difficulty.



Hold small weight. Bend your arm hold for 5 seconds and slowly



Straighten one knee at a time and hold for 5 seconds and lower.



Cross your arms and turn your head and body left and right



Lift your arm above your head then lower. You can also hold a weight in your hand



March your legs while sitting

## Exercises While Standing

In this section each picture will take you through exercises to complete whilst you are standing. Aim to stand close to some support such as the kitchen surface, a chair or another person.



Lift leg out to the side and back to the centre



Stand up on your toes and slowly back down



Lift leg out behind you and back to the centre



March on the spot



Squat down as able and stand up



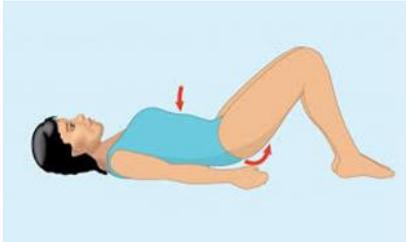
Sit to stand up from the chair (push up as required)

## Core Stability Exercises

In this section, each picture will take you through exercises that strengthen your lower back and torso muscles. These are called core stability exercises and will assist to maintain good posture and balance.

These exercises can be completed on your bed or on a mat on the floor. Please make sure you can get on and off the floor with ease if you wish to complete the exercises on a mat.

### Pelvic Tilts



Lying on your back with knees bent and feet on floor. Tighten your tummy muscles and press the small of your back against the floor letting your bottom rise. Hold 5 seconds and relax.

### Bridging



Lying on back with your knees bent and feet on floor. Lift your pelvis and lower back gradually off the floor. Hold this position for 5 seconds. Lower down slowly returning to starting position.

## Smoking and COVID-19

Smoking tobacco products increase your risk of infection due to the harm caused to your immune system and lungs.

- Smoking is linked with poorer outcomes in COVID-19.
- It's never too late to stop.
- By stopping you can see benefits within 24 hours.

HSE continues to support people with stopping smoking by telephone and medication via a pharmacy. If you would like information on how to stop call: FREEPHONE 1800 201 203 FREETEXT QUIT TO 50100.



## Well-Being and Recovery

### Psychological Well-Being

In hospital and after discharge home, you may experience difficulties such as fatigue and sleep disturbance, anxiety, panic, depression, trauma responses, changes in the ability to think clearly and concentrate, as well as difficulty adjusting to home and the impact upon relationships with partners and others with whom you may live. For each of these challenges we suggest strategies that could help with coping in these situations. You may not need to read all of these so we invite you to read the sections you find most relevant and read the corresponding strategies.

We hope you find this information and advice helpful and wish you well in your continued recovery. These difficulties will mostly settle with time. However, if you feel you need additional help or if any of these issues persist for longer than a few weeks or months following discharge, please mention it to your GP.

What you may experience	What could help you cope with this
<p><b>Sleep difficulties</b> - trouble getting to sleep, more frequent waking, and an altered sleep-wake cycle.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try any or all of the <b>Tips for Restful Sleep</b> listed below</li> </ul>
<p><b>Anxiety</b> – you may find yourself <b>worrying more often</b> following a stressful experience such as being unwell. For example, you may worry about becoming unwell again, fear of death or dying, or challenges that lie ahead. This can trigger our body’s automatic survival mechanism (<b>fight or flight</b> – see <i>‘What is Anxiety’ below</i>) which includes many physical reactions as it prepares for danger. Even if the danger has already passed, or hasn’t actually happened but we think it could, <b>our thinking about it creates a stress response in our body now.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try the <b>‘Belly Breathing’</b> or <b>7/11 breathing</b> exercises described above.</li> <li>• Try doing a <b>Mindfulness</b> practice as noted above.</li> <li>• Try either of the <b>Relaxation Techniques</b> suggested above or do an activity you find enjoyable</li> <li>• Do some <b>physical activity</b> – it may be the exercises in this booklet, it might be a mindful walk, or some gentle yoga stretches</li> <li>• If you find feelings of anxiety persist for <b>more than of couple of weeks</b>, please <b>seek help from your GP</b> as there are treatments available that may help.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Panic</b> – if you experienced <b>breathlessness</b> as a symptom, this may give rise to feelings of intense anxiety or panic. Panic can happen suddenly and trigger physical symptoms including breathlessness which can make us feel more panicky and lead to a vicious cycle – see <b>‘Breathlessness and Anxiety Cycle’</b> below</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use <b>any of the strategies recommended for anxiety</b> if you can manage them in the moment</li> <li>• Try the <b>6 Step Approach to Panic</b> outlined below.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Depression</b> – you may notice that your <b>mood is low</b>. This might include feeling upset, tearful, hopeless, caring less about your appearance, withdrawing, not enjoying activities you usually like, and having thoughts about death or dying.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It can be useful to bring your attention to <b>things that you enjoy</b> or <b>things that you have had success with</b> as people often disregard these when mood is low.</li> <li>• It is worth <b>scheduling activities</b> that give you a <b>sense of achievement, enjoyment or closeness to others.</b></li> <li>• If your <b>motivation is low, commit to an activity for just a couple of minutes.</b> After a few minutes <b>you can choose to stop or continue</b> (you might find you want to continue).</li> <li>• If you find low mood extends for <b>more than of couple of weeks</b>, please <b>seek help from your GP</b> as there are treatments available that may help.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Trauma</b> – for some people the experience of being <b>severely ill</b> and <b>hospitalised</b> with COVID-19 may have been <b>highly distressing</b>. Factors such as social isolation, staff wearing protective equipment, medical procedures or treatments that were frightening or difficult to tolerate, and perhaps experiencing hallucinations may have contributed to this. You may find some of these <b>difficult memories frequently intrude into your mind uninvited and rather vividly</b> and feel distressing all over again. You may have <b>nightmares</b> and <b>difficulty sleeping</b>, feel on <b>‘high-alert’</b> a lot of the time, <b>irritable</b>, <b>panicky</b>, your <b>mood may be low</b>, or you may feel <b>guilty</b> or <b>angry</b> at yourself or others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try either of the <b>Relaxation Techniques</b> suggested above or do an <b>activity you find enjoyable</b></li> <li>• <b>Self sooth</b> by <b>looking at calming photos, listen to favourite music, smell something pleasant, eat something tasty, or give yourself a kind physical gesture</b> such as gently holding your arm or giving yourself a hug</li> <li>• Draw attention to the <b>things that are within your control</b> and try to <b>let go</b> of things that are beyond your control</li> <li>• <b>Avoid watching too much news or social media</b> if it is making you feel anxious, try <b>limiting</b> how often you look at the <b>news</b> (e.g. once a day).</li> <li>• <b>Speak to family and friends</b>. They may not understand but it can help to talk.</li> <li>• <b>Be kind to yourself</b>. Imagine <b>what you would do if someone you cared about was in your position</b>. What would you say to them?</li> <li>• If you continue to experience <b>intrusive memories, overwhelming emotional distress or feeling detached or numb, nightmares and difficulty sleeping</b>, or <b>using substances</b> to help you cope with the feelings, <b>contact your GP for help</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cognitive difficulties</b> - you might notice difficulties with <b>memory, attention, processing speed</b> (how quickly you make sense of information) and <b>problem solving</b>, ranging in severity from subtle to obvious. Factors which make people more vulnerable to cognitive difficulties include lengthy critical care stay, delirium, mechanical ventilation, diagnosis of sepsis, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), older age, and pre-existing cognitive problems. This may have an <b>impact on your ability to do daily tasks</b> you previously would have done. Your ability to think and concentrate <b>usually gets better with time</b>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Memory and planning supports</b> such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- post it notes</li> <li>- a diary</li> <li>- mobile phone reminders</li> <li>- placing items in view as a prompt (e.g. an appointment letter on the fridge)</li> <li>- allowing extra time for tasks</li> <li>- doing one thing at a time (try to avoid having to multitask)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Do things that help <b>improve your mood</b> (being in good mood improves cognition)</li> <li>• Always having <b>glasses and hearing aids with you</b></li> <li>• <b>Regular physical exercise</b> can help cognitive functioning (check with your doctor first)</li> <li>• If these difficulties last for <b>more than six weeks</b>, please <b>seek help from your GP</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Difficulty adjusting home and impact on relationships</b> – you <b>may not be able to do what you previously were able to do</b>. This might feel <b>frustrating</b> or <b>disheartening</b>. You may experience <b>anger</b> or <b>guilt</b> towards yourself or those around you whom you now have to depend on to do things for you. You may have a sense of being <b>more snappy</b> or <b>withdrawn</b>. You may have ‘good days’ and not so good days and that is understandable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the <b>‘Fatigue and Pain Management’</b> advice suggested above</li> <li>• Try any or all of the <b>Tips for Restful Sleep</b> listed below</li> <li>• Try the <b>‘Belly Breathing’</b> or <b>7/11 breathing</b> exercises described above</li> <li>• Try doing a <b>Mindfulness</b> practice as noted above.</li> <li>• Try either of the <b>Relaxation Techniques</b> suggested above or do an <b>activity you find enjoyable</b></li> </ul>

<p>This too should settle in time as you adjust to daily life and continue to recover.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do some <b>physical activity</b> if you are able – it may be the exercises in this booklet, it might be a mindful walk, or some gentle yoga stretches</li> <li>• <b>Speak to family and friends.</b> You may find it more helpful to speak with someone outside of your home who is not involved in daily life (e.g. a friend), however, talking to the people you live with or who are part of your daily life may help them better understand what you are going through.</li> <li>• <b>Be kind to yourself.</b> Imagine <b>what you would do if someone you cared about was in your position.</b> What would you say to them?</li> <li>• <b>Practice gratitude</b> – every day <b>write down 5 things you are thankful for.</b> Focus on what you are able to do rather than what you can't do at this moment. Think about all the people who are supporting you in your recovery and are wishing you well.</li> <li>• <b>Be patient with yourself and with others.</b> If these feelings persist for <b>more than of couple of weeks,</b> please <b>seek help from your GP.</b></li> </ul>
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### Tips for Restful Sleep

- Try to go to bed and get up at a **similar time each day**
- If you need to **nap, keep it short and earlier in the day** as it can impact your night time sleep and leave you tired the next day
- Try to **limit stimulants** such as caffeine (especially after midday) or alcohol, try a herbal tea or caffeine free alternative
- Do some **physical activity** during the day but not within 3 hours of bedtime
- Have a **bedtime routine** with some relaxing activities (e.g. reading, mindfulness, breathing exercise, or take a bath/shower)
- Try to **avoid screens and devices** for at least an hour before bedtime, the light of the screen will trick your brain into thinking it is day time as well as stimulating your brain activity
- Create a **sleep sanctuary** by making your bedroom as **dark and quiet** as possible and reserving bed for **restful and pleasurable activities** such as sleep, sex, reading, or meditation
- Trying really hard to fall asleep when it is proving difficult can lead to frustration and ironically makes drifting off more unlikely. Telling yourself **“I’m awake and I’m ok with that”** can take the pressure off and in a form of reverse psychology can make falling asleep more likely, or at least less stressful.

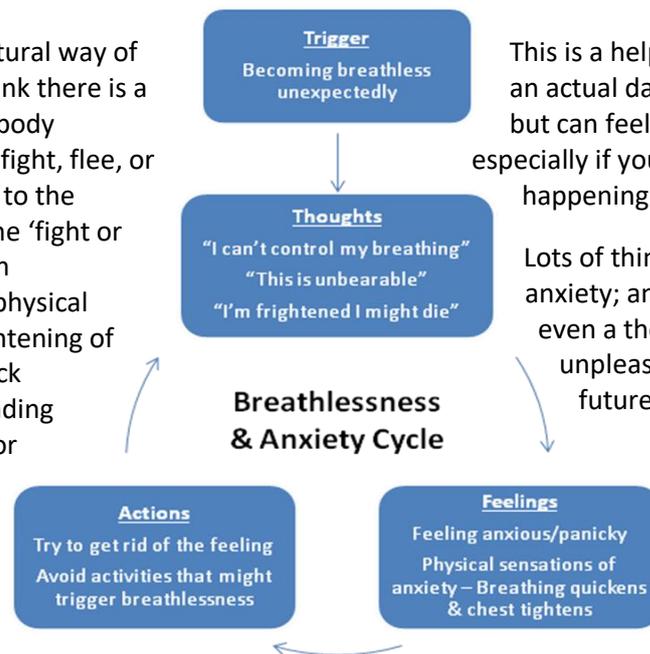
## Breathlessness and Anxiety

Everyone feels out of breath at some time. You might get out of breath while doing intense physical activity such as running or walking briskly up a steep hill. You might expect this type of breathlessness and therefore it feels within your control.

Experiencing breathlessness through physical illness can happen more unexpectedly and therefore feels more out of your control. Feeling breathless can be frightening. When you feel out of breath without meaning to you can start to experience anxiety about this. Symptoms of anxiety can include similar feelings of breathlessness and hence we feel more breathless which can start a vicious cycle.

### What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is the body's natural way of responding when we think there is a danger or a threat. The body prepares itself to either fight, flee, or even freeze in response to the situation (often called the 'fight or flight' response). We can experience a variety of physical sensations including tightening of muscles, chest pain, quick shallow breathing, pounding heart, and feeling faint or shaky.



This is a helpful response when there is an actual danger. It passes after a while but can feel uncomfortable at the time, especially if you are not aware of what is happening and why.

Lots of things can trigger feelings of anxiety; an event, physical sensation, even a thought about something unpleasant, or worrying about the future.

### Getting stuck in the cycle

Trying to get rid of the anxious feeling and the physical sensations that go along with it often make you feel worse. And if what triggered it was feeling breathless, you might start avoiding activities that you think might lead to it happening again. Over time this reduces your activity level and hence your fitness, which increases how often you become breathless. It also gets in the way of doing things you enjoy!

### Getting out of the cycle

It is helpful to be able to recognise what anxiety feels like so you know what it is when it happens. There are things you can do in the moment, such as breathing techniques or mindfulness meditation, which are helpful ways of coping until the feeling has passed. In the longer term, it can be helpful to recognise thoughts that get you caught up in the cycle and learn how to let go of these before the anxiety increases

## 6 Step Approach to Panic

1. **ACCEPT** – recognise feelings of anxiety and any associated physical sensations that are already present;
2. **PERMISSION** – allow the feelings and physical sensations to be there, tell yourself that it is OK to feel this way;
3. **BREATHE** – focus on your breathing aiming to make your exhale longer than your inhale (think of blowing a big slow bubble);
4. **SELF TALK** – use truthful, helpful statements to help you through the anxious time. E.g. “This WILL pass.” “It’s just anxiety.” “It feels uncomfortable but it cannot hurt me.”
5. **DISTRACT** – do something physical to use up the additional energy in your body (move, walk, exercise) or do an activity that helps focus your mind (read, do something creative, talk to someone);
6. **LET TIME PASS** – the feelings will subside. When you are feeling more settled see if you can reflect on the experience and notice what may have contributed to it (e.g. a fearful thought, putting pressure on yourself to do more than you are able).

It takes patience and practice. The only way to stop fearing panic is to gently allow yourself to experience it and make your way through it so that you can realise that it won’t hurt you. There is no need to avoid or fight it.

## Nutrition

Nutrition plays an important part in your recovery process but at this time you may also have loss of appetite or you may have lost weight while you were unwell.

While recovering your body will require some extra energy. It also needs more protein to help repair the body. Below you will find some ideas for snacks that are both high in energy and protein:

Sandwich or Wrap with Cheese, Egg, Tinned fish, Chicken , Roast Beef or Nut Butter	<i>Add some extra mayonnaise or hummus</i>
Beans on Toast	<i>Add some cheese on top</i>
Burger in a Bun	<i>Add some fried onions and slice of cheese</i>
Bowl of Chicken or Lentil Soup	<i>Add some cream, milk or coconut milk</i>
Cheese on Crackers	
Baked potato with Cheese, Beans or Tuna	<i>Add some extra spread</i>
Slice of Brown Bread with Smoked Salmon or Cream Cheese...or both	
Boiled/ Poached/ Scrambled or Fried Egg on toast	<i>Add some fried tomato and mushrooms</i>
Pancake or slice of Toast with Nut Butter	
Bowl of Milk Pudding	<i>Add some jam or honey on top or have some jelly with it</i>
Bowl of Cereal such as Porridge, Granola, Muesli	<i>Make with full fat milk and add yoghurt</i>
Wheaten scone with cheese	<i>Add some chutney or relish</i>

Below are some tips for you if you have a poor appetite/ weight loss:

- Eat foods you enjoy. A healthy eating pattern that you may normally follow may need to be parked for a little while as your body needs some extra energy to recover.
- If your appetite is poor try to eat a small meal or snack every 2 hours during the day.
- If you are tired make use of offers from others to make meals for you. Ask them to make some extra portions to add to your freezer.
- Supermarket ready meals can also be helpful if you don't have the energy to cook.
- Try to drink foods that are calorific e.g. full fat milk, milkshake, smoothie, hot chocolate, malt drinks, latte, cappuccino, pure juices.
- Add calories to your food – add butter onto potatoes and vegetables, use a sauce on vegetables, fry your meats and use full fat products.

Vitamin D: Talk to your Doctor, Pharmacist or Dietitian about your need for Vitamin D.

If you have any concerns about your appetite or weight please speak with any of the health professionals looking after you to request a referral to a Dietitian for support. Also if you are under the care of a Dietitian and have a medical condition that requires a specific diet please link with your Dietitian for individual advice.

You will find some high energy high protein recipe ideas in the recipe book Making Every Bite Count linked in the resources section at end of this booklet.

## Self-Management Resources

Below is a list of resources which may help you (and/or others you live with) to become as active as possible and to do this safely in your home. There is also some specific information on coping with breathlessness and anxiety. If you do not have access to the internet, we hope you can ask a family member, neighbour or voluntary support group to print some of the resources for you.

ISCP Physical Activity Guidelines and tips for older adults – [www.iscp.ie/events-and-news](http://www.iscp.ie/events-and-news)

Government COVID-19 advice- <https://www.gov.ie/en/>

Free Technical Support for seniors during Covid-19: 01-9633288

The Asthma Society of Ireland: 0890590132 Asthma and COPD Advice

MANAGING BREATHLESSNESS How to cope with being breathless - <https://bit.ly/3bJttrt>

ENERGY CONSERVATION - <https://bit.ly/39s2sa8>

BREATHING EXERCISES - <https://bit.ly/3arhbDM>

SPECIFIC CORONA VIRUS INFORMATION Top Tips: Staying well when social distancing - <https://bit.ly/39ulm0k>

Useful links include:

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/covid-19/minding-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>

[https://www.who.int/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-coronavirus/healthyathome?gclid=EAlaIqobChMIytat6\\_-G7gIVSurtCh3hIQUsEAAYASAAEgKNP\\_D\\_BwE](https://www.who.int/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-coronavirus/healthyathome?gclid=EAlaIqobChMIytat6_-G7gIVSurtCh3hIQUsEAAYASAAEgKNP_D_BwE)

<https://thewellnesssociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Managing-Coronavirus-Anxiety-Workbook-Irish-Edition-1.pdf>

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/mindfulness.html>

[www.mindfulness.ie](http://www.mindfulness.ie)

[www.franticworld.com](http://www.franticworld.com)

<http://www.freemindfulness.org/>

<https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/get-support/covid19/>

<https://www.aware.ie/support/support-line/>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/ptsd-trauma/coping-with-emotional-and-psychological-trauma.htm>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/sleep/getting-better-sleep.htm>

## **Acknowledgements**

Post Covid-19 Patient Information Pack (2020), Homerton University Hospital, NHS Trust

HSCP Covid 19 Rehabilitation Manual (2020), Mater Misericordiae University Hospital

British Lung Foundation

Higginson IJ, Maddocks M, Bayly J, Brighton LJ, Hutchinson A, Booth S, Ogden M, Farquhar M. on behalf of the NIHR Applied Research Collaborative Palliative and End of Life Care Theme. April 3rd 2020. Managing your breathlessness at home during the corona virus (COVID-19) outbreak.

St. George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (2020).

COVID-19 Managing Breathlessness.

Dr James O Shea (2020) – Mindfulness Practices and Activities

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