

Rehabilitation following COVID-19

Physiotherapy & Occupational Therapy

Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for patients who have recently been in hospital with COVID-19.

What is this leaflet about?

This booklet has been designed to provide you with information on the condition, and what you can do to help aid your recovery whilst you are in hospital and once you are home.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 (C-19) is a new type of Corona Virus which predominantly affects the airways. This causes shortness of breath, coughing and sometimes the level of oxygen in the blood goes down.

It is passed between people via airborne droplets from coughing or sneezing, or from surfaces that an infected person has touched.

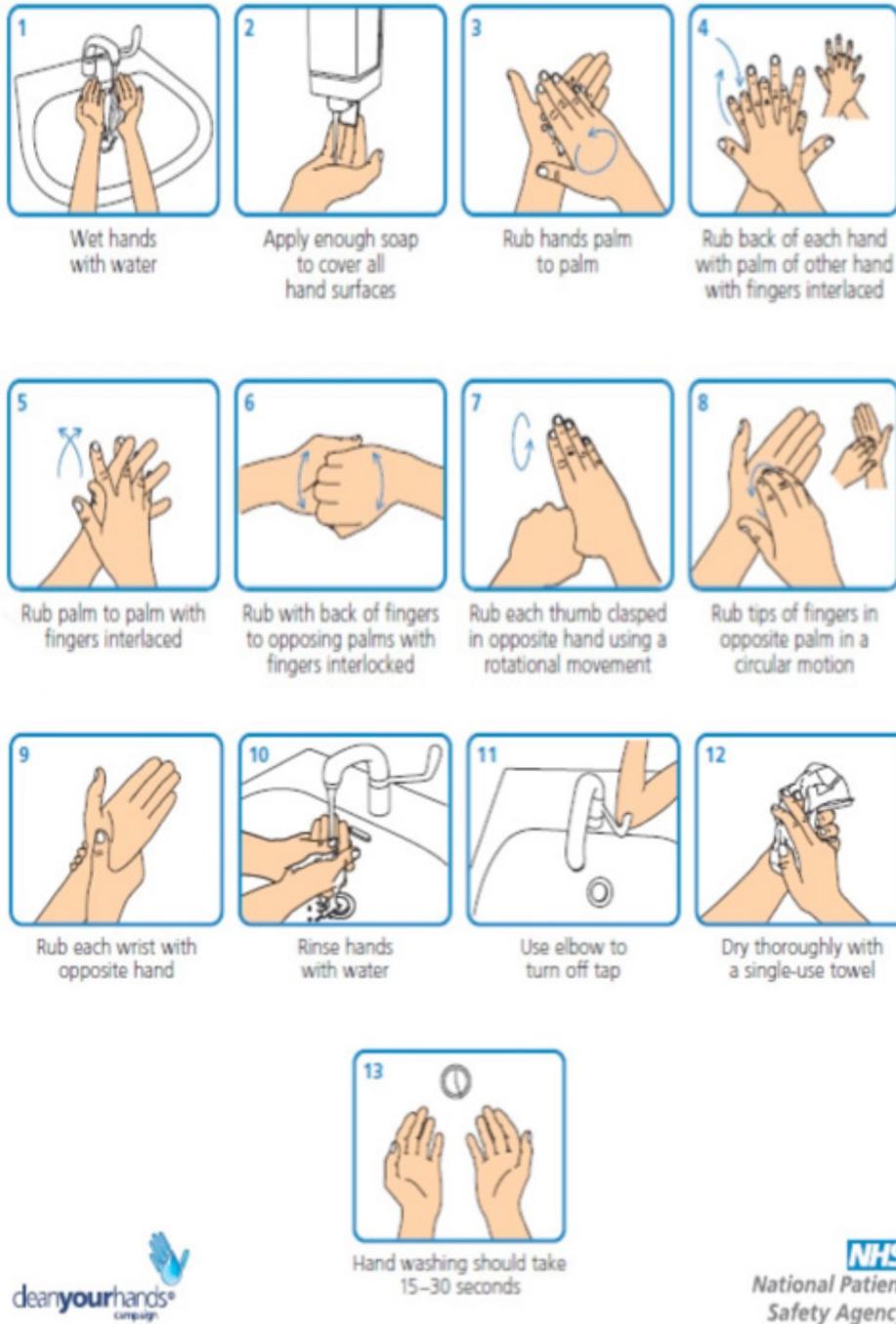
The incubation period of the virus is anywhere between 2 and 14 days, which is why if a person remains well 14 days after contact with someone with C-19, it is unlikely they have been infected.

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

How can I help to stop the spread of C-19?

Frequent and thorough hand washing is one of the best ways to reduce the spread of C-19 (and many other infectious diseases). The pictures below show the correct technique for washing your hands.



DO

- Wash your hands with soap and water often and for at least 20 seconds
- Use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards

DO NOT

- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

What will happen when I am ready for discharge from hospital?

Upon discharge from the ward you should be able to walk around and complete your normal activities of daily living. You can discuss any difficulties in daily living with the Occupational Therapist.

Your medication may have been changed from what you were taking prior to your admission. A supply of tablets will be given to you before you leave the hospital with information and instructions. Your GP will continue to prescribe the medications required after this initial supply. Please discuss any concerns you have regarding your medication with the medical team.

If you feel there will be a difficulty with your relatives or friends collecting you or with your journey home, please discuss this with your nurse.

What can I do to help myself recover from C-19?

The best thing you can do for your recovery is to start moving. Start with your normal daily activities such as getting out of bed, washing, eating and drinking independently, then sitting out in a chair.

Important things to remember before exercising

Whilst you were unwell, your body will have used energy needed to survive from its stores in your muscles. Combine this with reduced activity levels and this may mean that your muscles are smaller and weaker.

Activities may seem harder and more tiring than you are used to. Patients have found this can lead to them becoming increasingly inactive, or catching up on jobs when they have a good day, which then leads to a flare-up of pain or general weakness and the need to rest for a few days.

This can feel frustrating and like you're not improving. Make sure you pace yourself - little and often is the best course of action.

Repetitions:

Start with 6 - 8 repetitions of each activity and gradually increase up to 12 repetitions.

Frequency:

Try doing these exercises at least 2 times a week to improve your balance and strength.

What can I do to help with my breathlessness and fatigue?

There are some things you can do to help with the breathlessness and fatigue that you may experience even after you go home:

Pacing

- Spread activities out over the day by prioritising what needs to be done.
- Take frequent breaks to avoid an over activity/under activity cycle.
- Try not to talk and move at the same time.
- Give yourself time to recover your breath and conserve your energy for the task.

Positioning

The muscles you use to breathe are the same muscles that support your shoulders and neck. These positions, shown below, help to support your shoulders so that your muscles can be used solely for breathing.





Are there any techniques I can use to improve my breathing?

There is a very widely used technique called 'The Active Cycle of Breathing'.

ACBT is a breathing technique that helps to loosen and clear mucus from the lungs, improve ventilation in the lungs and improve the efficiency of your cough.



Breathing control This is gentle normal breathing using your stomach. Put 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.

Deep breaths Focus is on taking a deep breath in, slowly through your nose, hold your breath for 3 seconds, followed by a gentle relaxed breath out through your mouth.

Huffs Take a big breath in, keep your mouth open imagine steaming up a mirror with force and huff all the air out of your lungs. (Use breathing control between huffs to avoid getting breathless.)

Cough Try a big strong cough if you have phlegm on your chest and you don't manage to clear it with huffing. If this is painful, try hugging a pillow tightly when coughing.

If you do not have any phlegm to cough up, then concentrate on cycles of breathing control and deep breathing.

What can I do if I feel too tired or weak to exercise?

You may feel tired but even some basic exercises will be beneficial to your recovery. The ones below can even be done whilst you are in bed.

Start with 6 - 8 repetitions of each activity and gradually increase up to 12 repetitions.



Move your ankles up and down.



Push your knee down into the bed.



Push your knee into a towel and lift your heel off the bed.



Place a plastic bag under your heel (to avoid any friction to your skin) slide your heel along the bed towards your bottom, then straight again.



Bend your knees and lift your bottom off the bed.

The following section shows you some easy exercises to do in a chair. Getting out into the chair when you're ready will greatly benefit your lungs, muscles, circulation and digestive system.

Start with 6 - 8 repetitions of each activity and gradually increase up to 12 repetitions.



March your legs up and down for as long as you can, whilst in a sitting position.



Straighten one knee at a time and hold for 3-5 seconds, repeat on the opposite leg.



Cross your arms across your chest, turn your head and body to the left, then the right.



Lift your arm up above your head then lower it back down. Repeat with the opposite arm.



Keep your elbows tucked in, move your arms in and out.

Standing Exercises

Hold onto a firm surface for all standing exercises, for example, a kitchen work surface. Not all exercises need to be done at once so break them down into manageable sessions.



Marching on the spot.



Starting with feet flat on floor, push up onto your toes and then gently back down.



Lift the leg out behind you and then back to the centre.



Sit to stand: push up from the chair (use your hands if you need to, can progress to arms crossed across body).

How will I know if I am doing too much?

Shortness of Breath Modified Borg Dyspnea Scale	
0	Nothing at all
0.5	Extremely Slight (just noticeable)
1	Very Slight
2	Slight
3	Moderate
4	Somewhat Severe
5	Severe
6	
7	Very Severe
8	
9	Extremely Severe (almost maximal)
10	Maximal

This is a scale that asks you to rate the difficulty of your breathing - please use it to help with monitoring your breathlessness while exercising.

You could use this to score how well your lungs are recovering.

It is important to take regular rests and stop before you get too short of breath.

You should be aiming to exercise within zones 3-5 on this scale. For example, you would rate yourself to be in Zone 4 (somewhat severe) if you could say one or two words but were unable to speak a full sentence.

It is normal to be out of breath and for your heart rate to increase with exercise and walking, but this should return to normal within five minutes after finishing.

Exercising at moderate levels will help increase endurance and improve lung function.

If you keep a record of your scores and activities using the activity log on the next page, you should be able to notice improvements over time.

Weeks after hospital discharge	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Week 1 Minutes walked + breathlessness score							
Week 2 Minutes walked + breathlessness score							
Week 3 Minutes walked + breathlessness score							
Week 4 Minutes walked + breathlessness score							
Week 5 Minutes walked + breathlessness score							
Week 6 Minutes walked + breathlessness score							

What else can I do to help my recovery?

While regular exercise is important, you should also take some time to relax both your mind and body. Your body has been through a lot so it is important you make time for yourself regularly.

Stress and anxiety is not uncommon after illness. It can:

- increase both your heart rate and blood pressure
- interrupt your sleep
- cause low mood which may affect your ability to resume your normal day to day routines.

Guided imagery is a technique which involves mentally visualising a place in your life that represents safety, comfort or happiness.

Places may include a garden, a beach or a house. You can practice some deep breathing exercises during this.

It does not take very much time and regular practice can dramatically reduce your stress levels. Some good examples of mindfulness can be found on 'Every Mind Matters' on YouTube, the 'Headspace' app (available from any app store), and 'Be Mindful' (an online course which you can find through using any search engine).

www.headspace.com

www.bemindfulonline.com

Go on to YouTube www.youtube.com and search for 'Every Mind Matters'

Doing things that you enjoy is a great way to relax. This may include:

- Listening to music
- Reading a good book
- Sitting in the garden
- Drawing or doing something creative
- Yoga

Is it normal to feel anxious?

Anxiety is something everyone will experience and feeling anxious is a very normal reaction to the illness you are overcoming. Sometimes feelings of anxiety can be overwhelming and can affect your daily life.

Anxiety can make your heart race, make you feel sweaty, shaky and short of breath. It can cause changes in our behaviour such as becoming overly careful or avoiding things that trigger anxiety.

Top tips to cope with anxiety

1. Understand your anxiety

Try keeping a diary of what you are doing and how you feel at different times to help identify what is effecting you and what you need to take action on.

2. Make time for worries

If your worry seems overwhelming and takes over your day, setting specific "worry time" to go through your concerns each day can help you to focus on other things.

3. Face the things you want to avoid

It is easy to avoid situations or rely on habits that make us feel safer, but these can keep anxiety going. By slowly building up time in worrying situations, anxious feelings will gradually reduce and you will see these situations are okay.

4. Challenge your anxious thoughts

If your worry seems overwhelming and takes over your day, setting specific "worry time" to go through your concerns each day can help you to focus on other things.

5. Shift your focus

Some people find relaxation, mindfulness or breathing exercises helpful. They reduce tension and focus our awareness on the present moment.

6. Get to grips with the problem

When you are feeling stressed or anxious it can help to use a problem solving technique to identify some solutions. This can make the challenges you are facing feel more manageable.

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。