

# COVID-19 CARE Information

**C – COVID**

**A – and**

**R – Rehabilitation**

**E – Exercise**





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# Introduction

Recovery from COVID-19 will take time. The length of time needed will vary from person to person and it is important not to compare yourself to others. Ongoing symptoms could last for several months after you contract COVID-19 and this can be perfectly normal.

**The after effects from -COVID-19 may affect you physically, mentally and emotionally. This may include:**

- Muscle weakness and joint stiffness
- Breathlessness
- Slow to resolve cough
- Extreme tiredness (fatigue) and a lack of energy
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Sleep problems
- Problems with mental abilities – for example, not being able to remember some events, think clearly and being forgetful
- Changes in your mood, or anxiety or depression
- Nightmares or flashbacks
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

People have recovered from COVID-19 at home, or they needed looking after in hospital or they needed extra support in intensive care. Everyone will need different levels of support during recovery and progress is very unique.

**If you are recovering from Intensive Care:**

During your time in hospital you may have stayed in one of our intensive care beds. This may have been for a few days, weeks or even months. Being in intensive care can be overwhelming. You may have difficulty remembering what happened to you. You may have felt scared, angry, or helpless. You may have had vivid dreams, nightmares or visions that upset you. These things are normal for someone who has been in intensive care. You may find it hard, but it can help to talk to someone you trust about this. It is nothing to feel ashamed or embarrassed about.

Many people who leave the intensive care unit (ICU) will make a good recovery with time. Sometimes there can be ongoing problems like those mentioned above. You may also experience problems with your voice or swallowing, if you have been on a ventilator machine to help you breathe.

It will take time for some of these problems to settle, however, some people may require ongoing support and treatment to help them recover.

There are websites which have very useful information you or your relatives may like to access. You can find a list at the end of this booklet. If you feel you are struggling or your problems are not resolving please contact your GP.

## **Breathlessness**

Some people may have breathing difficulties after recovering from COVID-19. At the moment, it's not clear if this is from the virus or from receiving treatment for the virus. There is active research working to understand more about this and in time, there will be a clearer picture.

As you continue with your recovery it is important that you gradually increase your activity levels even though you may feel tired and experience breathlessness. This leaflet includes advice on how you can manage your breathlessness and gradually return to everyday activities.

## **Normal and abnormal breathing**

Breathlessness can be very frightening but breathlessness itself is not harmful or dangerous.

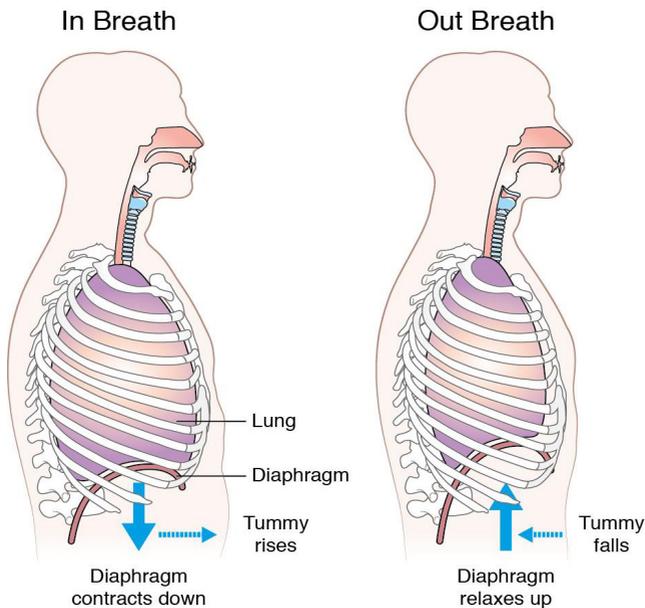
Sometimes, the ways we try to cope with the feelings of breathlessness can unfortunately worsen the feeling. Being breathless can often lead to the development of an inefficient breathing pattern. We feel like we need to 'get more air' so take big breaths in. You will find your breathing is shallower and you will be only breathing from the top of your chest. Your shoulders may be hunched and you might find yourself using your arms to brace yourself, for example, on the arms of a chair.

While you may find this position supportive, it does not allow you to use the full movement of your lungs and actually restricts your breath. The muscles that support breathing, particularly around your neck and shoulders are over-used in an attempt to pull more air in. This increases the effort of breathing and makes it less efficient. Knowing how to control your breathing can help you remain calm.

## Muscles involved in breathing

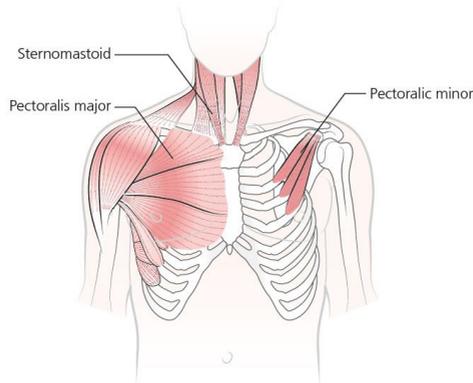
### The diaphragm

The main muscle of breathing is the diaphragm. As you breathe in, it contracts to draw the air into your lungs and your tummy rises. When you breathe out, it relaxes, returning to its natural dome shape and your tummy to resting position. The diaphragm is strong and does not tire easily.



## Breathing accessory muscles

There are many muscles around your neck, upper chest and shoulders which principally move your neck and arms. However, when you are breathless, these muscles can pull on your ribs to help with breathing. These muscles are called breathing accessory muscles.



It is normal to use these muscles for short periods of time when very breathless, however; they are not designed to help with breathing for long periods. They need extra energy and effort to use and fatigue far quicker than the diaphragm.

When used unnecessarily, these muscles can unhelpfully focus the breathing on the upper chest, making the breathing pattern inefficient. If you continue to overuse the breathing accessory muscles they may become tight, stiff and sore.

It is normal to use your breathing accessory muscles when breathless, but also important to relax and 'switch them off' once the breathlessness episode has passed.

Try to focus your breathing movement on your tummy (diaphragm) as much as possible and keep your breathing accessory muscles in 'reserve'.

# Controlling your breathing

There are things that can help improve and control breathing and help you remain calm. These include **breathing techniques (details below), cooling the face with a fan or cold flannel, and finding a comfortable position.**

## General advice

- Avoid breath holding during activities such as climbing stairs or bending
- Try to 'blow as you go', which means breathing out on effort, try to blow out when bending, lifting, reaching or standing up from a chair
- Try to avoid rushing
- Try pacing your breathing with your steps, take a breath in and out on each step when climbing the stairs

## 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

# Three techniques to help your breathing

## Technique 1 - Relaxed tummy breathing

### When to use

Relaxed tummy breathing may help you recover quicker from breathlessness after activity. It may also help your breathing to settle if you feel panicky. You may find it helpful to use this breathing method with a hand-held fan and a position to ease breathlessness.

## How it works

Relaxed tummy breathing is sometimes known as breathing control. The aim is to move from fast, upper chest breathing to relaxed, slow tummy breathing. This breathing technique helps to make your breathing as efficient as possible by focusing on breathing from your diaphragm, with the upper chest relaxed.



- **Rise** the tummy as you breathe in
- **Relax** the breath out
- **Rest** and wait for the next breath to come

Breathing from the tummy often does not come naturally. You should practise relaxed tummy breathing when you are not breathless for 10 minutes at a time, at least twice a day. This will help you master the technique.

Before practising, make sure you are in a comfortable position, with your head and back supported and your shoulders and upper chest relaxed. Place one hand on your tummy.

Breathe in through your nose if possible, this slows down your breathing and warms and moistens the air going into your lungs. Some people are unable to breathe through their nose so if that is you, you may have to use your mouth.

Feel the tummy rise and expand as you breathe in and relax down as you breathe out. Breathe gently when practising; there should only be a slight movement of your tummy at rest.

### **‘Breathe low and slow, relax, let go’**

If you have a tendency to breathe with small, fast breaths from the top of your chest you may find taking slower, deeper breaths from your tummy helps to ease breathlessness.

## **Technique 2 - Recovery breathing**

### **The 3Fs of recovery breathing:**

- **Forward** lean position – see next section
- **Focus** on long or relaxed breaths out. Some people feel that exhaling through pursed lips is helpful.
- **Fan** – handheld fan can be very useful as the flow of cool air over your face can reduce the sensation of breathlessness.

### **Keep cool**

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

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

### **How it works**

Recovery breathing allows more time for the air to leave your lungs as you breathe out, therefore creating more room for the next breath in. The aim of recovery breathing is to calm your breathing until you can breathe smoothly and quietly from your tummy again.

### **When to use**

Use recovery breathing when you feel extremely breathless or panicky and you are unable to use relaxed tummy breathing.

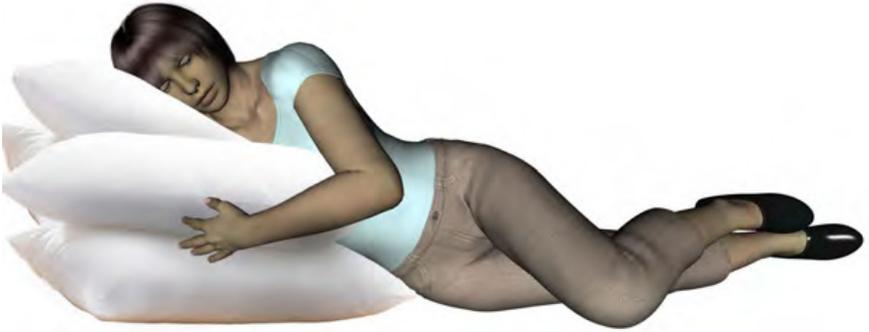
## **Technique 3 - positioning**

### **How positioning helps to ease breathlessness**

For the following positions, place the arms so the breathing accessory muscles are in a better position to help with breathing. Leaning forward from the hips frees your stomach so may improve the movement of your diaphragm, the main muscle of breathing.

## High side lying

- Lie on your side, with a few pillows under your head and shoulders. Some people like to use a foam wedge instead. A pillow between your waist and armpit can stop you sliding down the bed. Make sure the top pillow supports your head and neck.
- Your knees and hips should be slightly bent. Depending on your lung condition, it may be better to bend both of your legs or just your top leg.



## Sitting leaning forward at a table



Sit leaning forward from your hips with your elbows resting on a table. You can also put a few pillows or cushions on the table to rest your head on.

## Sitting Upright

Sit upright against the back of a firm chair. Rest your arms on the chair arms or on your thighs. Make your wrists and hands go limp.



## Sitting leaning forward



Sit leaning forward from your hips with your elbows resting on your knees. Make your wrists and hands go limp and try not to grip or clench your fists.

## When standing or out and about

Lean forwards resting your elbows onto a wall, a windowsill, a railing or a countertop. You could lean on a walking stick or a long umbrella if you use one. You can lean on a trolley while you are out shopping. A walking frame with wheels can be helpful.



## Relaxation techniques

Breathlessness can make us feel anxious, which in turn can add to our breathlessness. The following relaxation exercises can help:

- **Visualise** a relaxing scene, such as a favourite place, a walk, a garden, the beach or somewhere from your imagination that makes you feel happy and secure (not places that remind you of bad or sad memories). Imagine what you can see, hear, feel and smell.
- **Body scan:** Scan your body from head to toe, trying to release any tension in your muscles
- **Let go of thoughts.** Imagine you are sitting on a riverbank watching leaves drifting downstream. When you become aware of a strong thought or feeling, try to step back from it a bit and let it float past just like the passing leaves in the stream.

# Cough

Coughing is the body's way of protecting our lungs and getting rid of things that irritate them. This is a normal and important function. However, following some viral infections we can be left with a dry cough because our lungs have been irritated. This should gradually disappear during the course of your recovery however, it is not clear how long after Coronavirus you should expect to have a cough and it can be frustrating at times.

A dry cough is one of the most commonly reported COVID symptoms, although some people might find they have a cough that produces phlegm.

It can be difficult to control your cough, however there are a few techniques which may help.

## **If your cough is dry:**

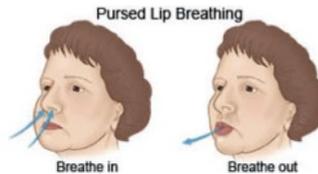
- Keep yourself well hydrated by drinking small sips of water throughout the day and reducing caffeine and alcohol intake.
- Keep a glass or bottle of water handy. If you feel yourself starting to cough take small sips of liquid. You may only need a few sips or you might need to have many to help control coughing. This can soothe your throat. Sucking a sugary sweet may also help.
- Drink a warm drink, such as honey and lemon, as this can soothe your throat.
- Swallow repeatedly if you have a cough, but don't have a drink near you. This can work in a similar way to sipping water.
- Steam inhalations can help to add moisture to your throat and nose. Pour hot water into a bowl, and then put your head over the bowl. If comfortable, cover your head and bowl with a towel. You don't need to add anything, the steam alone is sufficient.
- If you have a runny nose, blow your nose if required. Try not to sniff.
- If you cough when you go to bed consider using some of the positions discussed above to ease your breathing.
- Avoid things that make you cough, for example: Smoking and smoky atmospheres, air fresheners or strong smelling candles, strong perfumes or deodorants.

## If your cough has some phlegm (mucus, sputum)

- Stay hydrated
- Inhale steam
- Breathing techniques may help. You can find helpful instructions via this link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmuRxztsS0NzuE-juX2WAe17x32TQLgs->
- Try lying on either side, as flat as you can. This can help drain the phlegm
- Try moving around; this will help to move the phlegm so that you can cough it but Changes in temperature can irritate your airways and cause coughing, try to carry out 'Relaxed Tummy Breathing' (see page 8) if you are moving to an area with a different temperature.

Try to breathe in through your nose. Breathing through your mouth can make your breathing faster and the air you take in is cooler which can make you cough more.

Carry out Relaxed Tummy breathing during gaps between coughs.



Gently blowing the breath out, as if you were whistling can also help.

If you feel you need further advice if you feel your cough is persisting, please contact your GP.

# Exercise

## .....What about exercise?

Some exercise can be helpful. This might be stretches or short walks (while carefully following government guidelines on the duration and social distancing). If you are someone who usually does a lot of exercises, it is important to only do a fraction of what you normally do as **over-vigorous exercise can actually set your recovery back**. Restart slowly - gradually increasing time and exertion levels.

You may know the story of the Tortoise and the Hare. As you recover 'slow and steady wins the race'! Taking your time but keeping going will be the most effective recovery plan.

An exercise booklet, CARE Programme accompanies this leaflet.

## Fatigue

Some degree of post-viral fatigue or debility (weakness) is fairly common after any type of viral infection. You will likely find that your energy levels will fluctuate from day to day. Fortunately, in most cases, this is short term and there is a steady return to normal health over a period of a few weeks.

We don't know for sure what causes post-infection or viral fatigue. But one of the reasons why people have fatigue, loss of energy, muscular aches and pains and generally feel unwell is the reaction of the body's immune system to produce chemicals to attack the virus.

When fatigue and flu-like symptoms last for a longer period of time once the acute infection is over, research is showing us that what is a perfectly normal immune system response to the acute infection has not returned to normal. Continuing fatigue does not appear to mean you still have the virus or are still infectious to other people as far as we know at present.

While most people with post-infection fatigue will improve and return to normal health, **good management and having a recovery plan during the very early stage** is an important factor in trying to help any natural recovery process take place.

## **Convalescence (recovery)**

Good old fashioned convalescence is the most important aspect of managing post viral fatigue. This means taking things easy and having plenty of rest and relaxation. This should be combined with gentle activity within your limitations, having a good night's sleep, eating a healthy diet, avoiding stressful situations and not returning to work, school or doing too much around the house until you are well again.

Some people find that adding in approaches like meditation or yoga can help with relaxation. Others don't find this useful, it's about what works for you.

Overall progress can vary with some people making a steady improvement back to normal health. Others will have good days and bad days. Doing too much on a good day will often lead to an exacerbation (make worse) of fatigue and any other symptoms the following day. If this is how you feel (it may even be a couple of days to feel the effect of your exercise) this is also normal and is called post exertional malaise.

## **Managing your energy levels**

When people are starting to feel better, it is tempting to want to get back to work and start to do more leisure and social activities. It is crucial that you do this slowly.

Some activity done in a slow, gentle manner can be increased gradually but it is important to take this slowly.

Try your best to resist pushing through fatigue and do activity in manageable chunks. Keep your expectations low during your recovery period and listen to how your body copes with gradually increasing activity.

It is better to stop before you get tired.

Pace your activity, try to build up slowly by setting realistic and achievable goals.

## **Why do I feel more tired?**

Tiredness is a common symptom in recovery from a virus. If you are experiencing breathlessness too, this can make tiredness worse. It is normal to feel less motivated to keep active when you feel tired, which means often you avoid activities. This can lead to you having less energy, which in turn can make you more tired. When this behaviour becomes a habit, you can gradually lose stamina and fitness so that the cycle can often be difficult to break. With time, tiredness lessens but in the meantime, there are a number of ways in which you can manage it. These, in turn, may help you to do some of the things that you would like to do.

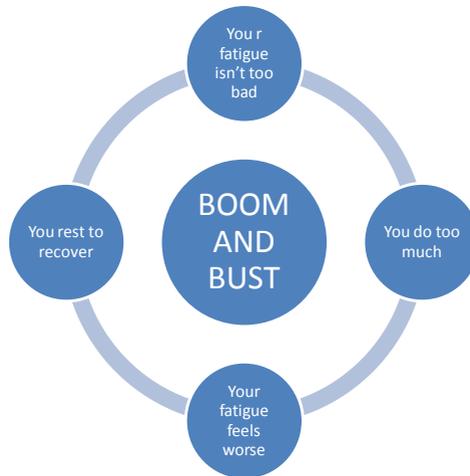
## **Returning to normal activity levels**

It is important to gradually return to activity after a period of illness. You should listen to your body, if an activity feels strenuous you may realise that this is too much for that day. Don't be discouraged, try this activity again the next day if you feel better and experiment with doing a bit less and taking short breaks to allow your body to recover and recharge.

It can be very frustrating as your mind may feel that you should be able to achieve more than your body is allowing you to. If you have previously been quite fit, you may feel you should quickly return to your usual levels of activity but remember you are in a period of recovery and a gradual approach is the key to getting back to better health.

Try to avoid all or nothing or "boom and bust" patterns of activity. Overdoing it leads the body to need more recovery time. Try to hold back on a good day to allow you to do more on a less good day.

# Boom and Bust



Over time this BOOM and BUST cycle can spiral downwards meaning we are able to do less day to day. Resting is important but be careful of 'over-resting'

Find a baseline of the amount of timed activity you can comfortably manage for several days without increased fatigue and gradually building this up is the key to sustained progress and recovery.

Keeping a balance between activity and rest and change the type of activities that you do in your day. Don't do too many strenuous things all at once.

Breaking up your day with efficient rest times which are just enough to recharge you, can really help your body to recover. Try to notice if you are sliding into over-resting which can further deplete your stamina.

# How to Manage My Activities of Daily Living (Every day activities)

## Planning

Planning includes organising daily routines to allow completion of essential activities when you have the most energy. You may find it more helpful to perform strenuous tasks such as dressing early in the day when strength and stamina are often at their peak. It is important to think about the task before performing the task and expending physical energy.

### Consider the following:

- Think about the steps that need to be completed and the items you need.
- Prepare the required items ahead of time.
- Keep frequently used items in easily accessible places.
- Have duplicate items available to limit unnecessary trips between the bathroom, bedroom, or kitchen.
- Consider using a bag, basket, or rolling trolley to carry tools or supplies in one trip.
- Consider your weekly routine. It will be beneficial to schedule strenuous activities, such as going to the hairdresser, attending religious services and shopping, evenly throughout the week instead of all in one day.

## Pacing

Slowing down your activities, although this might be frustrating, will take less energy. Slow down when you talk, laugh, eat or cough – these actions can affect your breathing pattern. Remember, if your breathing pattern goes astray this increases feelings of breathlessness. Once activities are planned, pacing allows you to sustain an energy level until the task is completed.

### Consider the following:

- Allow plenty of time to complete activities and take 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 before 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

The third strategy is often the most challenging. When faced with limited energy reserves individuals must look critically at work, family, and social roles and keep only those roles that are necessary and pleasurable.

### 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 allows you to enjoy activities you would like otherwise miss because of fatigue.

## Positioning

Positioning is extremely effective but not often considered when addressing energy conservation. Your normal methods of doing everyday tasks may be using more energy than required.

- 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, you find you will need to slouch and bend which results in more energy expenditure.
- Use long-handled devices such as reachers or telescope cleaning tools to stop you having to bend or reaching.
- Bathing - use a shower or bath seat and a hand-held shower head

## **How active should I be?**

Regular exercise helps with energy levels and prevents your muscles becoming weaker. A little regular gentle exercise each day can make all the difference. When recovering from an illness 'Little and Often' seems to be the best approach, trying three or four short sessions of gentle exercise so that your body has a chance to expand its comfort zone frequently but gently, building this up over time.

### **Walking and climbing stairs**

- Pace your breathing to your steps; breathe in over one step, breathe out over the next two steps.
- Move at a comfortable pace and avoid holding your breath.
- Use walking aids or shopping trolleys if they help you.
- Stop and rest whenever you feel the need.
- Have resting points at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Use the handrail when climbing stairs, take the steps slowly, one at a time and stop to rest when you feel the need to. You can discuss this with your physiotherapist or occupational therapist.

### **Eating and drinking**

- You may feel your breathlessness is worse when you eat or drink.
- Take more frequent, smaller meals or snacks rather than a large one.
- If possible sit at a table to eat your meals. This helps to keep your chest "open."
- Think about the type of food you eat. Avoid chewy food and try eating food with a soft texture or food with a sauce like soup, scrambled eggs or mince and potatoes.
- Drink sips of fluid frequently to avoid becoming dehydrated.
- Consider using frozen vegetables, mixes or pre-prepared foods.
- Freeze food left over to be used another day.
- Try to avoid lifting heavy pans.

## **Taste Changes**

Some people have experienced a change in taste and smell as part of CoVID infection. This has ranged from a bland taste to a metallic or salty taste. To help manage this:

- Avoid having very spicy or hot foods
- Use plastic cutlery to reduce the metallic taste
- Brush your teeth and tongue twice daily – avoids the build-up of plaque which can worsen the effects of taste changes
- Take regular sips of non-fizzy drinks throughout the day

## **Sleeping**

It can take a while to get back into a normal sleep routine after being unwell and in hospital.

- Sticking to a routine for getting up in the morning and going to bed at regular times can be helpful.
- Maintain a comfortable temperature in the bedroom
- Try not to sleep for too long periods - get just as much sleep as you need to be refreshed
- Try to get into a routine of going to bed and getting up at the same time
- Try to eliminate noise in the bedroom
- Activity or exercise promotes a balance between activity and rest and may assist with sleeping
- Avoid drinking caffeine based drinks and food before going to bed. If you are not sleeping at night, try not to sleep during the day. If you need to sleep during the day, try to keep this down to a short nap (setting an alarm to help you) rather than a prolonged sleep.
- A short nap in the early afternoon may give you enough energy to get through until a reasonable bedtime. This would be a more helpful plan, rather than falling asleep in the sofa in the evening which will disrupt your night time sleep.
- Read or listen to radio or music to help you drift off but avoid screens from phones, tablets and computers in bed.

## **Taking care of yourself**

Focus on the things that you can currently do which you enjoy, find relaxing, which give you a sense of achievement or help you to feel connected to others.

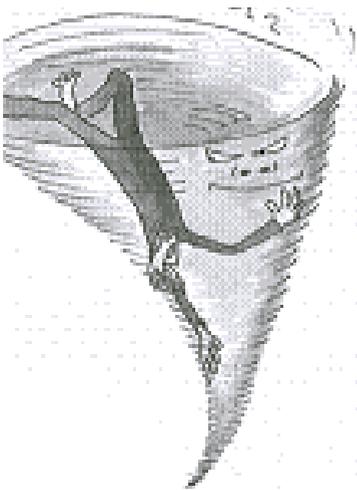
You can set yourself a diary, or goals, of things to do which you enjoy and will give you a sense of accomplishment.

## Anxiety

Feelings of tension and anxiety are normal experiences following difficult or life threatening events. Anxiety is a common feeling and is not all bad in short spells. It can motivate us, makes us pay attention, gears us up to do well with some activities and prepares us for rapid action to get out of dangerous situations.

Anxiety can make you experience physical feelings which are new and can include:

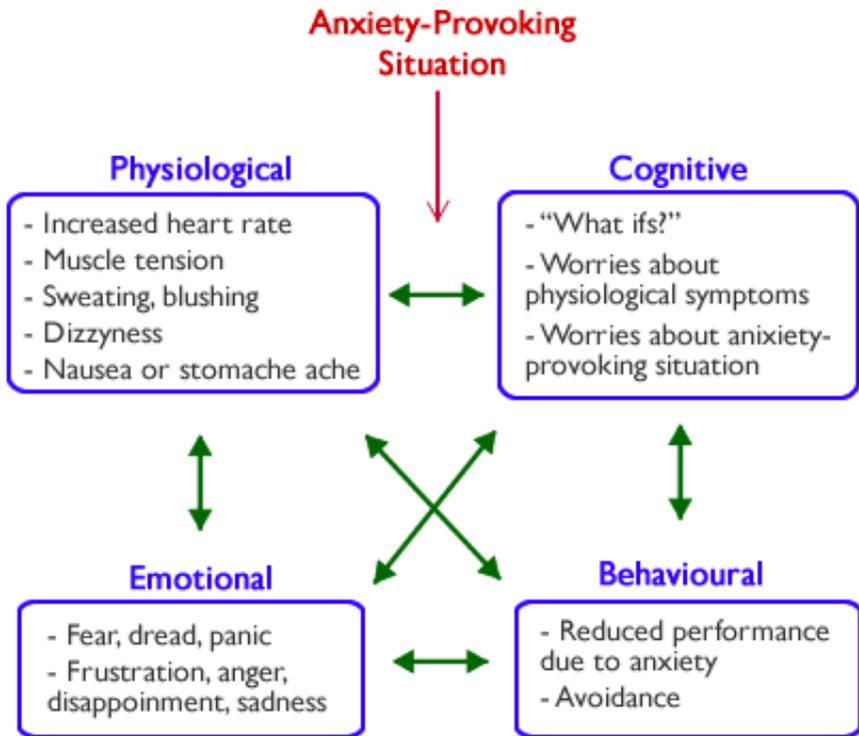
- Fluttering in your chest (palpitations)
- Racing heartbeat
- Breathlessness
- "Butterflies" in the stomach
- Shaking
- Being more sensitive to your surroundings



### Downward Spiral

This is a common situation and feelings are normal but continued feelings and experiences lead to this well-known worsening situation which can be difficult to break.

These are normal symptoms of anxiety, they are not dangerous and will pass. The physical symptoms are our body's automatic response to danger so we are ready to fight, run or freeze. This is ideal if there is a physical danger, but not if the trigger is worries or memories of difficult situations. However, once you begin to notice symptoms produced by anxiety as threatening, you become scared of those feelings. Your mind can then react with more worry which creates more and symptoms and a cycle sets up and can continue.



### Relaxation to help anxiety

When recovering from an illness, it is understandable to experience times of worry and stress; to dwell on what might have been or what might happen in the future. Using some form of relaxation during this time may prove very helpful in reducing some of the physical symptoms of anxiety. This can help you see that symptoms can be controlled and often pass in time. Even knowing this can often in itself lead to a reduction in anxiety.

## **Low Mood**

Despite recovering from the virus, you may be left with feelings of low mood, which can in some cases lead to depression.

The experience of being ill on top of having to deal with your respiratory problems, can leave you feeling physically drained and mentally depleted. Low mood can include feelings of despondency, low motivation and negative views about yourself, the future and your situation. You may find it more difficult to motivate yourself or engage in activity, above and beyond your physical difficulties.

We take low mood and other symptoms of distress extremely seriously. If you feel you have symptoms of low mood please speak with your respiratory health professional or visit your GP. If you are having thoughts of suicide or self harm, please contact your GP or emergency services, or use the numbers below which can give you immediate support.

Samaritans ..... **116 123**

Breathing Space ..... **0800 838 587**

NHS 24 ..... **111**

## **Experiences of trauma**

Another form of distress can include intense memories of being ill, or of the treatment process and procedures that you may have experienced. This can often be the case for those who have been treated within Intensive Care Units (ICU), when symptoms have worsened and you have required more intensive treatment.

If you have experienced this level of treatment, you will know that hospital environments can be quite frightening and the treatment involved in helping you recover from the virus unpleasant. We know that some of these experiences can result in psychological effects which add to the difficulties of physical recovery for many.

Some of these psychological effects can include:

- Having strong memories, flashback and nightmares of illness or treatment
- Avoiding thoughts, places or reminders to do with your illness or treatment
- Low mood
- Strong feelings of being constantly alert to physical feelings.

Any or all of these feelings may be how you feel at various stages during your recovery.

Again, if you recognise any of these symptoms please speak with your respiratory health professional or GP. They may ask you directly about these symptoms. In most cases these symptoms resolve over time as you recover, but others may need more structured help and therapy and may be referred to specialist services.

## **Information for Relatives**

While your relative was in hospital you would have had limited contact with them which may have caused emotions such as anxiety and stress. You may have had difficulty with eating or sleeping and by the time your relative returns home your 'tank' may be running low on energy.

Following on from this you may find yourself in a position where you have to help to care for your relative more than you did previously which can also be a drain on your energy stores.

### **Things that may help:**

- Make sure to look after your own mental health
- Talk to your relative
- Talk to family or friends
- Maintain a routine for both you and your relative

If you find that you are still struggling, contact your GP.

## Conclusion

Whatever you are feeling is normal for you! Progress can be slow. This doesn't mean anything is wrong.

Look for milestones on your journey.

Think of one week of progress to compare and show change then look at improvement over the months. Keeping a diary where you log your daily activities can be helpful to remind you of progress at times when you don't feel like things have progressed as much as you expect.

Manage your expectations and remember that recovery takes time and is very individual so try not to compare yourself to others.

Be kind to yourself and remember to ask for help if you need it.

A support hub has been set up by Asthma UK and the British Lung Foundation to provide information and dedicated support for people who have been diagnosed with Covid-19 and their family members.

This can be accessed at: <https://www.post-covid.org.uk/>

- If you have a lung condition and are worried about COVID-19, you can find answers to your questions and concerns on this site which is updated every week with new questions.

This can be accessed here: <http://europeanlung.org/en/qa-covid-19>

## Useful Websites

Anxiety, fear and panic- from NHS <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/understanding-panic/>

Low mood, sadness and depression - from NHS <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/low-mood-and-depression/>

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)- from NHS <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/>

Intensive care - a guide for patients and relatives from ICU Steps <https://icusteps.org/assets/files/IntensiveCareGuide.pdf>

Post-ICU syndrome - an overview from the Society of Critical Care Medicine <https://www.sccm.org/MyICUCare/THRIVE/Post-intensive-Care-Syndrome>

## Resources for this leaflet

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Cambridge University Hospitals Breathlessness Intervention Service <https://www.cuh.nhs.uk/breathlessness-intervention-service-bis>

The ME Association

<https://www.meassociation.org.uk/2020/04/covid-19-and-post-viral-fatigue-syndrome-by-dr-charles-shepherd-30-april-2020/>

NHS Lancashire Teaching Hospitals

<https://covidpatientsupport.lthtr.nhs.uk/>

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