

# Caring for yourself after coronavirus (COVID-19)

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## Information for patients

This booklet gives information about recovering from coronavirus. It gives practical advice on the areas that people recovering from coronavirus have told us are difficult.

We suggest you use it as a self-management guide. Work through it, section by section, and try to use some of the suggestions in your own personal recovery plan. Try to focus on the symptoms that are affecting you the most.

At the end there is advice on where to seek more help if you need it.

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# What is coronavirus?

Coronavirus has an official name: severe acute respiratory syndrome COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2). It is a viral disease in humans which is very infectious and affects people in different ways. Our understanding of how to treat people who have it, and prevent people from getting infected by it, is changing all the time. There are now vaccines for it but, because the virus is fairly new, we do not know exactly how long they will protect you for. No vaccines are 100% effective so we cannot get rid of the virus completely.

## How do people catch coronavirus?

The virus can be spread by droplets (sneezing or coughing), or when people interact closely with each other. The droplets can be inhaled, or they can land on surfaces and be picked up by other people. These people can get infected when they touch their nose, eyes or mouth. This is why washing your hands, social distancing, and wearing a mask are the best ways to protect yourself.

The time between exposure to the virus and the start of symptoms is currently estimated to be 1-14 days.

We do not know if people are at risk from getting the virus more than once. There have been some reports of this happening but this is not thought to be common. We strongly recommend that if you have had the infection, you should still follow Government guidance.

## What symptoms do people get?

Symptoms of coronavirus vary in severity. Some people have no symptoms at all (asymptomatic) while others may experience a fever,



cough, sore throat, general weakness, fatigue or muscle pain. Loss of sense of smell and sense of taste are common symptoms. In severe cases, people can become very ill, quickly, needing intensive care in hospital.

People over 70 years of age, and those with underlying health conditions (such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease and cancer) are more at risk of developing severe symptoms. Men and people from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups are also more at risk.

## What is a normal recovery from coronavirus?

Our understanding of coronavirus and recovering from it is changing all the time. We are learning that some people recover quickly and fully, but that others have a difficult or long recovery. Some people report a range of difficulties including physical and psychological symptoms. **We know from experience with other viruses that recovery will be different for everyone.**

## How to build up your strength

Making sure you get more rest than usual is a sensible and important thing to do when you have had an infection. Your body needs time to heal. After the worst of the illness has passed, and the fever has gone down, it is important to find a balance of rest and activity. We know that people suffering from fatigue after serious infections need to gradually and consistently increase their activity to recover.

## Why resting too much can slow your recovery

Getting enough rest is a vital part of recovering from a serious viral infection - particularly during the fever. However, taking too much rest, months after the infection has gone, will produce weakness



and loss of strength, and will make your fatigue worse in the long term. This is because the less you use your muscles the weaker they become.

People rest because they are tired, but this weakens their muscles. Having weaker muscles makes it even more tiring to do anything. They then start to avoid activity because it makes them feel tired. The more they avoid activity the weaker their muscles become and the more tired they become.

## How to find the right balance of activity and rest

- Achieving a balance between rest and activity can be difficult at first. After infection with coronavirus it is important to start doing things again. However, this must be done gradually.
- Start at a place that feels comfortable or easy for you. Although you might have been able to do a lot in the past, it is important to be realistic in your goals while you recover.
- Be consistent in how you approach this and do small amounts of activity regularly. If possible, include short walks outside. If you are shielding, a walk in the garden or a few 'sit-to-stand' exercises each day can help to get you started.
- A sit-to-stand exercise involves standing from a seated position. It strengthens legs, stomach and back muscles. Gently build strength by using the arms of the chair to help you stand at first. As you get stronger, try it without this support and build up the number of repetitions.
- Exercise in the form of walking will increase your physical fitness and will help to reduce fatigue. Things might get slightly worse before they better but do not be put off.
- If you are struggling, you can reduce your goals to a more manageable level and then build up again.



## How to gradually build up activity and rest

Once you have built up a consistent approach to activities again, think about doing a little more. Try to build up gradually and consistently with small steps. Avoid the temptation of doing a lot on a good day as this can often lead to you feeling exhausted and unable to do anything the next day. This can affect your confidence. Try to build up gently, day by day.

## How to manage your fatigue (tiredness)

Fatigue is a very difficult symptom for people to live with. It interferes with things you would like to do which can be frustrating and affect your mood.

It takes time to rebuild energy levels. There are a number of strategies you can use to try and manage fatigue and the impact it has on you and your daily life.

Here are some suggestions to help you manage your fatigue.

## Managing expectations you place on yourself

It is worth thinking about allowing yourself to do things in a different way that helps with your energy levels.

Learning to adjust the expectations you place on yourself, and the frustration that comes with not being able to do the things you want, is extremely difficult.

- Try to be patient with yourself and give yourself more time to do things.
- Try to recognise and focus on the things that you are achieving, instead of things you cannot do yet.
- Try not to feel disappointed if your recovery seems to be slow. Everyone has a different recovery time.



It might be helpful to write down in a diary your activities as you make steps towards recovery. It can help remind you that you are moving forwards even if it progress feels slow.

**Remember that these symptoms will probably improve as you recover from coronavirus.**

## The 3 Ps principle (Pace, Plan and Prioritise)

This principle will help you save your energy through learning how to pace, plan and prioritise your daily activities.

**Pace.** Pacing is often associated with moving or developing something at a particular rate or speed. Try slowing your pace down until you are feeling a bit stronger.

Pacing yourself will help you have enough energy to complete an activity. You'll recover faster if you work on a task until you are tired rather than exhausted. The alternative, doing something until you're exhausted, or going for the big push, means that you will need longer to recover. Example: climbing stairs

The pacing approach	The big push approach
Climb 5 steps, rest for <b>30</b> seconds and re-peat. You won't need a long rest at the top and won't feel so tired the next day.	Climb all the stairs at once. You may have to rest at the top, and feel achy and tired the next day.

### Top tips:

- Break activities up into smaller tasks and spread them throughout the day.
- Build periods of rest into your activities, it is key to recharging your energy.
- Plan 30–40 minutes of rest breaks between activities.



**Plan.** Look at the activities you normally do on a daily and weekly basis, and develop a plan for how you can spread these activities out. If certain activities make you breathless or fatigued, plan ahead and do them throughout the day and not all at once.

Instead of having a bath or shower in the morning when you are busy, have one in the evening. Do weekly activities, such as gardening, laundry and food shopping, on different days.

### Top tips:

- Collect all the items you need before you start a task.
- For some people, specially adapted equipment is likely to make tasks easier. For example, using a rollator (wheeled walker) can make grocery shopping easier as well as helping your balance. If you have an occupational therapist, ask them for advice and support.
- You may get more done when family or friends are visiting and can help you.

**Prioritise.** Some daily activities are necessary, but others aren't. Ask yourself these questions to find out which of yours are necessary:

- What do I need to do today? What do I want to do today?
- What can be put off until another day?
- What can I ask someone to help me with, or do for me?

### Top energy-conserving tips:

- Don't hold your breath during any task.
- Try to avoid pulling, lifting, bending, reaching and twisting where possible.
- Push or slide items as much as possible, instead of lifting them.
- Bend with your knees rather than from your waist.





Here are some examples of how to use the Pace, Plan and Prioritise strategy to day-to-day activities:

## WASHING AND GROOMING

Pace	Plan	Prioritise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sit to wash your face, brush your teeth and dry your hair.</li><li>• Have rests after each.</li><li>• Pat yourself dry rather than rubbing.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep all the things you will need in the same place.</li><li>• Put a mirror at face level when sitting.</li><li>• Liquid soap lathers more quickly than a bar.</li><li>• Use long-handled equipment, such as a long-handled sponge.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Try dry shampoo.</li><li>• Use electrical items, such as a toothbrush and razor.</li></ul>

## SHOPPING

Pace	Plan	Prioritise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have a rest when you get to the shop.</li><li>• Take your time collecting your items.</li><li>• Put heavy items in different bags.</li><li>• Use a trolley to push your shopping home instead of carrying a bag.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make a list that follows the stores' layout.</li><li>• Shop for what you need so that you visit fewer shops.</li><li>• Shop at quieter times.</li><li>• Avoid large/deep trolleys to reduce bending when putting in and removing items.</li><li>• Pack items together that go in the fridge/freezer or same cupboard, so it is easier to unpack.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can a member of your family help?</li><li>• Can you do online shopping?</li></ul>



# Changes to your diet after coronavirus

The symptoms of coronavirus can affect your appetite and ability to eat, making it difficult for you to meet your body's nutritional needs. Other factors may have led to changes in your diet. Social distancing might make it harder for you to go to the shops, and you may be eating different foods with less nutritional value or, just eating less. Over time this can lead to your body not getting the right nutrients, which might slow down your recovery.

Losing weight without meaning to can be a sign of malnutrition, even if you are overweight. Malnutrition is a serious condition that happens when your diet does not contain the right amounts of nutrients.

It is important to be aware of your weight and appetite, particularly if you are older or have a pre-existing medical condition.

Malnutrition can also increase the risk of frailty, which is more common in older people. This can lead to weaker muscles and make you more vulnerable to infections, falls and needing extra care.

## **What you can do to reduce the risk of malnutrition**

If you are struggling to eat enough, or if you are losing weight or strength in your muscles, you might need to make some changes to make sure you get what your body needs to recover.

## **How do you know if you are at risk of malnutrition?**

Signs of malnutrition include:

- a reduced appetite, or disinterest in food
- unintentional weight loss
- clothes and/or jewellery which used to fit well, but now fit loosely.



## What to have in your diet:

- **Adequate protein** (for example, meat, fish, eggs or beans) is vital to protect your muscles.
- **Adequate hydration** (drinking enough fluids) is also vital for your health. If you have an infection, you need to drink more fluids.
- **Fruit and vegetables** (at least 5 portions every day) are a good source of vitamins and minerals, including folate (vitamin B), vitamin C and potassium. They are an excellent source of fibre, which can help to maintain a healthy gut and prevent constipation and other digestion problems.
- **Higher fibre starchy foods** (for example, potatoes, bread, rice or pasta) are an important source of energy and provide important nutrients to the diet including iron, calcium and folate.
- **Dairy (or dairy alternatives such as soya)** drinks contain calcium, potassium, vitamin D, and protein.

If you are worried about your diet and weight, please do speak to your GP. They can refer you to a dietitian. We also know that many people struggle to buy nutritious food at the moment. If this is a problem for you and your family, please discuss it with your GP. They can advise you on sources of financial or food support and also review your situation to see if you need additional food supplements.

## Healthy eating after recovery from coronavirus

Eating well and maintaining a healthy weight is important to keep you strong and fit, and help you fight infection and recover from illness. Complications and conditions associated with being overweight, such as type 2 diabetes or heart disease, can increase your risk of becoming more seriously ill with coronavirus and can make your recovery harder. If you are very overweight and you are thinking of losing weight, it is best not to do it while you are recovering from an illness. Wait until you have recovered fully.



# Coping with losing your sense of smell

Losing your sense of smell can be really distressing and have a potential impact on your appetite.

Nasal rinses are a good way to keep your nose clear. Your GP might prescribe nasal sprays or drops for you. It is important to apply these the right way. There are several videos showing how to, as well as other information about loss of smell, here,

**<https://abscent.org/nosewell>**

Meditation and breathing techniques can also help.

## How to manage changes to your swallowing

People who have been very ill with coronavirus and who needed support for breathing (artificial ventilation) while in hospital might experience problems with swallowing. You might find for example that you cough when you are eating and drinking. Your voice might also sound different.

This happens because the tube that was inserted into your throat to help you breathe has irritated your throat. These changes are likely to improve when the inflammation settles down. This can take weeks or months, but usually gets better without any treatment.

### **Strategies to help you swallow safely**

Difficulty swallowing certain foods, liquids or saliva can happen in varying degrees after coronavirus. As well as being unpleasant, this can increase the chance of food going down into your lungs rather than into your stomach. This can lead to problems, such as chest infections.



Listed below are some strategies you can use to reduce this risk.

- If you notice changes to your swallowing, it is very important that you discuss this with your doctor.
- Make sure you are sitting as upright as possible. Even if you are in bed, try and set the bed up so you are as upright as when you sit in a chair.
- Minimise distractions (including talking to people) whenever you are eating and drinking, to make sure you are focused on the task.
- Eat and drink slowly, making sure you take one sip and one mouthful at a time.
- Avoid eating and drinking when you are particularly tired. Try having smaller meals more often to allow for fatigue.
- Make sure you maintain regular oral care.

## How to manage changes to your voice

Below are some things you can do to protect your voice and help it recover.

- Always try to use your normal voice. Don't worry if all that comes out is a whisper or a croak. Avoid straining to force your voice to sound louder.
- Avoid trying to talk over background noise such as music, television or car engine noise.
- If your voice is no more than a whisper, try avoiding telephone calls, online or video conversations. Once your voice starts to improve, avoid long (more than 5 minutes) voice conversations. Try to use text-based options instead.
- It is common for your voice to get tired more quickly than normal. Take a break from talking when you experience discomfort or soreness in your throat. 30-60 minutes will give your voice time to recover.
- Keep well hydrated as this helps your vocal cords stay well lubricated.
- Use steam inhalations if your throat feels dry. You can do this by



putting hot water in a bowl, leaning over the bowl with a towel over your head, and inhaling. Use hot (but not boiling) water, to avoid scalding.

- Try to avoid persistent, deliberate throat clearing and, if you need to do it, make it as gentle as possible. Taking small sips of cold water can help to suppress the urge to cough.
- Try to relax when speaking, especially your shoulders, head and neck area.
- Activities such as shouting and singing can strain your voice when it is recovering. Try to avoid this until your voice has returned to normal. If you like singing, try humming or doing it quietly until your voice is stronger.

### **Things to avoid**

- Spicy foods that may cause acid reflux (acid that comes up from your stomach and irritates your throat)
- Caffeinated drinks
- Cigarettes and vaping
- Alcohol.

## How to manage breathlessness

Breathlessness is associated with shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. This can be really difficult to manage, but the information below might help.

If you feel your breathing is getting worse, or you experience new breathlessness, it is important to get medical advice.

### **General advice**

- Avoid breath-holding during activities, for example, climbing stairs or bending. Try to 'blow as you go'. This means breathing out on effort, such as when bending, lifting, reaching, or standing up from a chair, or walking.



- Try to avoid rushing.
- Try matching the rhythm of your breathing to your steps, for example, take a breath in and out on each step when climbing the stairs.
- Sometimes a fan directed towards your mouth and nose can help reduce feelings of breathlessness.

## **Pursed-lips breathing**

Some people find breathing in through the nose and out through narrowed lips helps to ease their breathlessness. This technique tends to help people who have breathlessness with conditions such as COPD or emphysema.

People who find this helpful often do it without realising they are doing it.

Pursed-lips breathing helps to keep the airways open, allowing the air to leave the lungs more easily. This creates more room for the next breath in.

## **Positions to ease breathlessness**

These positions may help to ease breathlessness at rest and after activity. Experiment with different positions, and change them until you find what works best for you.

The positions in this leaflet place the arms so that the breathing accessory muscles are in a better position to help with breathing. Leaning forward may improve the movement of your diaphragm, the main muscle of breathing.



Make sure you are fully over on your side. Resting your upper arm on a pillow may help.



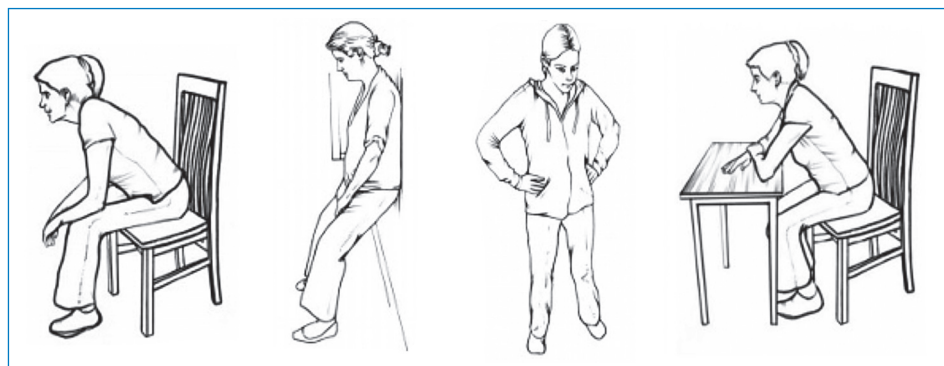
Relax down onto the pillows as much as possible. Having your legs apart may help.



## Positions to ease breathlessness immediately after activity

These positions might help ease breathlessness after you have been active.

With all positions, try to relax the hands, wrists, shoulders, neck and jaw as much as possible. Experiment with your arm position. Does your breathing feel easier with your hands behind your head or back?





# How to manage a persistent cough

Recovery from coronavirus might include persistence of cough symptoms. This may lead to irritation and inflammation which could make the cough worse. It is important to understand that you can gain some control over your cough to stop it getting worse.

Try the exercises below to help you.

## Cough management

- 1.** Follow a diaphragmatic breathing pattern by breathing in deep into your diaphragm (stomach). If you place your hand on your stomach you should see your hand rise and fall as you breathe. Try to practice this often. If you notice your breathing has become shallow and rapid use this technique to bring your breath back to your stomach. This is important as rapid breathing can increase irritation and make your cough worse.
- 2.** Identify any cough triggers and avoid them where possible (such as, spicy foods, air-conditioning, smoky environments, dust, talking a lot on the phone).
- 3.** When you first notice the urge to cough, try these techniques to help you to not cough:
  - Sip water
  - Suck boiled sweets (but not menthol as this can be an irritant)
  - Close your mouth and swallow
  - Breathe in and out through your nose
  - Pursed lip breathing (see above).
- 4.** It is also important to stay hydrated, and regularly sip water or other non-caffeinated drinks.



- **Try to stay calm, keep practicing and keep up your usual physical, work and social activities and routines.**
- **Focusing your attention on something you enjoy can really help to take your mind off it.**
- **Remember that most people will be more concerned about you rather than finding your cough troublesome.**

## How to manage problems with your sleep

Sleep is an essential part of feeling well and happy, but almost everyone experiences problems sleeping at some time in their life. Not being able to get to sleep, or having broken sleep, can be very distressing and can affect your wellbeing. Getting back to a healthy sleep pattern can take time and effort. The first step is to make sure you are practicing good sleep hygiene. We know this can be difficult for lots of reasons, such as doing shift work, being a parent, living in a studio or having noisy neighbours. Nearly everyone with sleep problems can improve the quality of their sleep by trying to follow the rules described below. See which of the following you could try and change to improve your sleep.



## Do

- ✓ Keep a regular sleep routine – wake up at the same time each day, weekends included.
- ✓ Get regular exercise each day, preferably in the morning (regular exercise improves restful sleep).
- ✓ Get regular exposure to outdoor or bright lights, especially in the early afternoon.
- ✓ Keep the temperature in your bedroom comfortable.
- ✓ Keep the bedroom dark enough to facilitate sleep.
- ✓ Keep the bedroom quiet – try thicker curtains, sleeping at the back of your house or earplugs to avoid being woken by noise.
- ✓ Only use your bedroom for sleep, sex, and getting dressed.
- ✓ Give yourself 1-1.5 hours to wind down before going to sleep, for example, have a warm bath.
- ✓ If you lie in bed awake for more than 20-30 minutes, get up, go to a different room (or different part of the bedroom), and do a quiet activity (such as non-excitable reading or television), then return to bed when you feel sleepy. Do this as many times during the night as needed.

## Don't

- ✗ Exercise just before going to bed.
- ✗ Engage in stimulating activity just before bed, such as playing computer games, watching an exciting movie or program on television, or having an important discussion with a loved one.
- ✗ Have caffeine (for example, coffee, tea, chocolate) in the evening.
- ✗ Have alcohol in the evening or use alcohol to sleep (it may make you drowsy, but it doesn't improve sleep and you may wake to go to the toilet).
- ✗ Smoke before going to bed. Nicotine is a stimulant and will keep you awake.
- ✗ Read or watch television in bed.
- ✗ Go to bed too hungry or too full.
- ✗ Take another person's sleeping pills.
- ✗ Take daytime naps or doze off in front of the TV in the evening. Keep yourself awake with something stimulating or you risk resetting your body clock.
- ✗ Try and make yourself go to sleep if you are not feeling sleepy. This only makes your mind and body more alert.



## How to manage anxiety (stress)

Anxiety has physical and mental symptoms. Sweating, dry mouth, fast heart rate or breathing, numbness and dizziness are all symptoms of anxiety. You might feel worried all the time, tired, unable to concentrate, irritable and have poor sleep. It can lead to unhelpful thinking patterns when you start to focus on uncertainty or negativity. It can feel like it is taking over.

Breathlessness can often cause anxiety and feelings of panic. Anxiety tends to make the feeling of breathlessness stronger, which leads to more anxiety.

It is important to understand that you cannot stop anxiety from happening – it is your brain's automatic survival mechanism. What matters is learning how to respond to anxiety helpfully, so that it does not become overwhelming. Anxiety is very common and lots of people overcome it or cope with it without professional help. However, some people need more support.

It is very important that you ask for more help if you need it. If people experience anxiety most of the time on most days, for at least 2 weeks, we recommend that they see their GP.

## How to cope with unpleasant feelings

There are several things you can do to help yourself cope with these feelings:

- **Do small things every day that are important to you, however you feel.** Do things you enjoy as well as things you have to do.
- **Speak to friends and family.** Make sure you are having regular contact with your loved ones and not just talking about your treatment.



Many people recovering from coronavirus will experience a range of emotions including feeling low, tired, anxious, tearful, having disrupted sleep, or experiencing unpleasant and distressing memories of what they have been through. For a lot of people this a predictable response to the extreme physical and emotional stress, and the feelings and experiences will resolve as they adjust and recover. For a smaller number of people these feelings may become a longer-term problem which need extra treatment and support.

**If any of these feelings and experiences get worse, start to be persistent and affect your day-to-day life, you may be developing a mental health problem. We describe these sorts of problems below and suggest when you should seek more help.**

## Depression

It is common to feel sad or have mood changes after a prolonged illness. If you find that changes in your mood are severe and persistent, it may be that you are developing depression. Common symptoms of depression include low mood, sleeping a lot more or a lot less than usual, appetite changes, poor concentration, loss of enjoyment in activities, irritability, loss of interest in sex, and thoughts of suicide or self-harm.

If you find you are having persistent sadness or low mood, loss of interest in things you used to enjoy and any of the other above symptoms every day, or most days, in the past 2 weeks you should seek further help from your GP.

## Post-traumatic stress symptoms or disorder

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is common in those who have been severely unwell, especially if you have been admitted to an intensive care unit. Symptoms of PTSD include flashbacks to traumatic experiences, nightmares, intrusive images or sensations,



poor sleep, anxiety and low mood, fear of further illness and hyper-vigilance to bodily symptoms

It is normal to experience upsetting and confusing thoughts after a traumatic event such as being critically unwell. For most people these problems get better over time. If you are still having distressing symptoms after 4 weeks you should seek further help.

## Problems with memory and concentration

Most people who have coronavirus will recover with no long-term impact on their memory or concentration. Others may experience some mild changes which do not last long. A small number of people have longer term problems with their memory, concentration and executive function (the ability to plan, solve problems and make decisions). This is more common in people who had problems in these areas before becoming ill.

## Managing severe changes in your mood

Dealing with all these difficult symptoms and other stressors may feel overwhelming. A few people may find that this affects their mental health. A mental health crisis is when people feel that they can't cope any more, and even have thoughts of harming themselves. It can feel very unpleasant, scary and overwhelming. If you feel like this, you must get help or ask someone to get help for you. There is a lot of support for people who feel like this.

There is NHS and voluntary sector support available. In working hours, tell your GP how you are feeling. Outside of working hours:

### **NHS services**

- The **NHS website** has advice on dealing with a mental health emergency or crisis

**[www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health](http://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health)**



- Call the **NHS helpline** on Tel: **111** or, if you think you are about to hurt yourself, call **999**.
- **South London and Maudsley NHS Trust** has a 24-hour mental health crisis line.  
Tel: **0800 731 2864** (option 1) or visit **[www.slam.nhs.uk/crisis](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/crisis)**

## Other services

- **Samaritans** has a free service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, if you want to talk to someone in confidence. Call them.  
Tel: **116 123**
- **Solidarity in a Crisis** is an out-of-hours support service, over the phone and in person.  
Freephone: **0300 123 1922**  
Text: **07889 756 087** or **07889 756 083**

## Useful sources of information

### Peer support for people who have been in ICU

There are 2 peer support groups in our local area for people who have been admitted to an ICU. These are friendly and welcoming groups where former patients and families can meet each other, share their experiences and help make sense of life after critical illness.

If you have been a patient of King's College Hospital ICU and want to find out more about this group, please

Email: **[kch-tr.ICURecoveryGroup@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.ICURecoveryGroup@nhs.net)**

If you have been a patient of St Thomas's Hospital ICU and want to find out more about this group, please

Email: **[ICUpeersupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:ICUpeersupport@gstt.nhs.uk)**

There are also online support groups for coronavirus survivors.



We cannot promote any one of these individually but would encourage patients to look in their local area and online to see if there is a forum that they find helpful. These groups often provide a valuable community of support for you during your recovery.

## Getting more help for your mood - talking therapies

You can access talking therapies for support with your mood, or symptoms of trauma, through Improving access to psychological therapies (IAPT). You do not need a GP referral and can refer yourself. If you need help to refer yourself, your GP or any health professional can also refer you. IAPT offer a wide range of options to help you manage and improve your mood, including individual or group talking therapies, and workshops to learn more about managing your mental health.

You can find contact details for your local services at,  
**[www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-psychological-therapies-service](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-psychological-therapies-service)**

**Southwark IAPT.** You can self-refer, or a professional can refer you by phone (expect an answer machine and call back)  
Tel: **020 3228 2194** Email: **slm-tr.SPTS@nhs.net**

**Lambeth.** Self-referral or professional referral by phone or referral form. Tel: **07971 717534**  
**<https://gateway.mayden.co.uk/referral-v2/a98fce9c-9ec0-4e3e-b5d4-e390ffa04b17>**  
**<https://slam-iapt.nhs.uk/lambeth/how-to-make-an-appointment>**

**Lewisham.** Self-referral, GP/professional referral  
Tel: **020 3228 1350** Email: **slm-tr.IAPTLewisham@nhs.net**  
**<https://gateway.mayden.co.uk/referral-v2/ec44a5ce-1e46-465a-ad50-e9943d78d02d>**





**Croydon.** Self-referral or GP/professional referral

Tel: **020 3228 4040**

**<https://gateway.mayden.co.uk/referral-v2/80a568ab-6ae0-4803-b9c6-0c849e6c4d7d>**

**Bromley.** Self-referral or GP/professional referral

Tel: **0300 003 3000**

**[www.talktogetherbromley.co.uk/#popmake-336](http://www.talktogetherbromley.co.uk/#popmake-336)**

## Getting help with your finances and other social needs

We know that coronavirus does not just affect people mentally and physically. For many people it has affected their ability to work, and their economy. A lot of additional support is available through your local council, including advice on how to access benefits, support with food, and care needs.

Your GP practice may have a social prescriber (professional who can help you connect to support services). Call your GP to find out. You can also contact your local Citizens Advice who can help you to get in touch with support services. You can find them at,

**[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)**

## Getting more information about recovery from coronavirus

Getting good quality information about coronavirus and your recovery is really important. We recommend the following as high-quality sources of information to help you learn more:

An online course about coronavirus recovery, including a module on managing low mood, relaxing and improving your personal coping abilities, **<https://covidpatientsupport.lthtr.nhs.uk>**



An online course about the psychological impact of coronavirus,  
**[www.futurelearn.com/courses/psychological-impact-of-covid-19](http://www.futurelearn.com/courses/psychological-impact-of-covid-19)**

The national coronavirus-recovery website which has much more information on diet, sleep and exercise to help you recover, as well as advice on coping with anxiety, mood disturbance and memory problems, **[www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk](http://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk)**

## **PALS**

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: **020 3299 3601**

Email: **[kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net)**

PALS at Princess Royal University Hospital, Farnborough Common, Orpington, Kent BR6 8ND

Tel: **01689 863252**

Email: **[kch-tr.palspruh@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.palspruh@nhs.net)**

**If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.**



## **NHS 111**

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

Tel: **111**

**[www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk)**

## **NHS website**

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing.

**[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**



