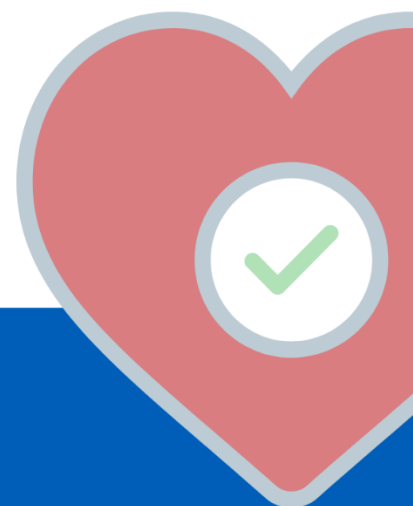


Recovery for fatigue after COVID-19

A booklet for patients



Recovery for fatigue after COVID-19 Patient Information Booklet

This booklet is intended to help you understand COVID-19 and suggests ways which may help speed up your recovery

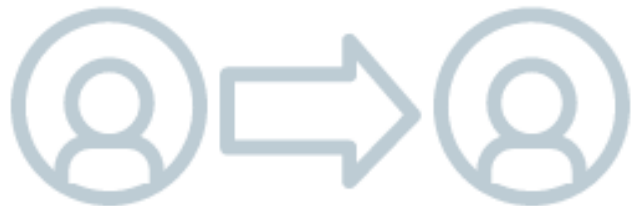
What is COVID-19?



Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) is the name given to the 2019 coronavirus which has not previously been identified in humans. [COVID-19 is the name used for the disease associated with the virus which is highly infectious.](#) Currently, there is no vaccine and no specific treatment for it. It is easier to catch than seasonal influenza and because it is new, nobody has prior immunity. This means that everyone can catch it.

How did I get it?

The virus can be transmitted by respiratory droplets via sneezing or coughing, or when people interact closely with each other. The droplets can be inhaled, or they can land on surfaces. Subsequently, people can get infected after touching infected surfaces, when they touch their nose, eyes or mouth.



The [time between exposure](#) to the virus and [onset of symptoms](#) is currently estimated to be [between one and 14 days](#).

What are the usual symptoms?

Symptoms of COVID-19 vary in severity. Some people have no symptoms at all (being asymptomatic) while others may experience a fever, cough, sore throat, general weakness, fatigue or muscle pain. In severe cases, rapid deterioration can occur. Loss of the sense of smell and loss of the sense of taste have been reported by some.

People above 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 and minority ethnic groups also appear to be more at risk.

How is it diagnosed?

Your GP will usually make a diagnosis based on the symptoms you are experiencing.

Are there any ways of treating COVID-19?

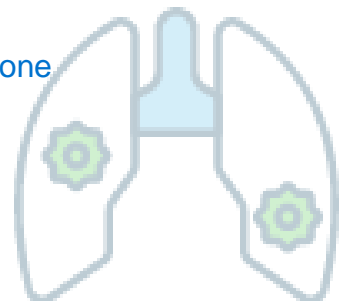
There are no known medical treatments.

Why do some people have a delayed recovery?

We don't know for certain why some people are slower to recover than others. Usually there is more than one reason, which may differ between one person and another.

Below is a list of factors, which could adversely influence recovery:

- Being overweight which may affect the immune systems ability to fight infection
- Being unfit
- Having another disease
- Losing fitness by resting excessively long after the infection has gone
- No obvious reason



Gaining strength during your recovery from COVID-19

Resting more than usual is a sensible and important thing to do when you have an acute infection. Your body needs time to heal. However, after the acute phase of the illness has passed, and the fever has reduced, either too much rest or too little can slow recovery. Results from studies on people suffering from fatigue after other serious infections suggest that there needs to be a planned and consistent gradual increase in activity to aid recovery.

The result of resting too much as time goes on

Adequate rest is a vital part of recovering from an acute virus particularly during the fever. However, excessive rest months after the infection has gone will produce weakness, loss of strength and fatigue long term.

Balancing activity and rest

Achieving a balance between rest and activity can be difficult. After COVID-19 it is important to start doing things again. However, this must be done gradually. Start at a place that feels easy. Remember that although you may have been able to do a lot more in the past it is important to be realistic and modest in your goals now. Be consistent in your approach and do small amounts of activity regularly. If possible, include short walks outside. If you are shielding, then a walk in the garden or a few sit to stand exercises daily can help to get you started. Exercise in the form of walking will increase your physical fitness and will help to reduce fatigue. Things may get slightly worse before they better but don't be put off. If need be you can reduce your goals to a more manageable level.

How to gradually build up activity and rest

Once you have built up a consistent approach to activities again then think about doing a little more. Try to avoid doing a lot on a good day and then crashing as this will set you back. Try to steer a steady course. Build up activity in small steps. If you tend to overdo things take a step back and do things in a more controlled way. Rome was not built in a day.

Do what matters

When you are getting back on your feet after being ill it can be helpful to think about the things that matter most to you. If connectedness is important to you then now is the time to “phone a friend”. This is as important as gaining strength physically. It is especially important if you live alone. Do what works for you but do use your social support network where you can.

What to do if you still have concerns about your health

After a serious virus such as COVID-19 symptoms of fatigue and breathlessness may persist for some time. Understandably you may worry about them. Both these symptoms respond well to activity and exercise. However, if you are concerned about new symptoms let your doctor know. They will investigate further if they are concerned.

Setting your body clock

Developing a good sleep routine can be hard after a bout of illness or even after a holiday. A good sleep routine though is key to recovery. It makes exercise easier and reduces the likelihood of muscle pain after exercise. Our body clock is regulated by our own behaviour such as having a regular up time in the morning and eating regularly. So try to set a reasonable up time in the morning. When resting during the day, use the sofa or sit out in a chair. Try not to catnap during the day as it tends to disrupt sleep at night. Being active during the day will help quality of sleep. Avoid alcohol where possible or caffeine in the evening as these stimulants will either stop you falling asleep or wake you up in the middle of the night.



Summary

- It takes time to make changes so be persistent and keep going even if you are not seeing changes immediately (may take two months or more)
 - A routine will help you to take charge of your life rather than your symptoms being in charge of you
 - Try to stick to the plan even if you feel like doing more or not doing anything at all
 - If your goal becomes too easy then increase the challenge ... Do it more often, increase the time, increase the difficulty. If it is too difficult then make it easier.... reduce the time or do it less often..
 - If you are unable to complete a goal one day be kind to yourself and try again the next day
 - Pat yourself on the back for every success however small you perceive it to be
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