This information sheet is available in large print and other formats and languages. Please contact:
Patient Services
Tel: 01752 763 031

This book has been written by the Physiotherapy team at Derriford Hospital. With many thanks to all colleagues and patients for their help.

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Introduction

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.

COVID-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.
**Hand Hygiene**

**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

**DON'T**
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
Treating your Breathlessness and Fatigue

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 help to support your shoulders so that your muscles can be used solely for breathing.

Devon Support Services


East Devon: District Council's Coronavirus Community Support Hub available to help local residents, communities and organisations access information and support. Tel: 01395 571500, Monday to Friday 09.00-17.00.

Cornwall Support Services

Supporting Cornwall. This online platform is a place for communities in Cornwall to connect and support each other through the Coronavirus. https://cornwall-link.madeopen.co.uk/

Volunteer Cornwall: can help with food shopping, collecting prescriptions, telephone befriending. Tel: 08872 266988

South Hams: Different voluntary support services are available in each parish: for more details: Website: https://southhams.gov.uk/findagroup
Tel: 01803 861234 (note limited office hours)

Southwest Support Services

Coronavirus community assistance directory: Find help in your community https://coronavirus.scvo.org/

Age UK: Tel: 0800 6781602
Lines open 08.00-19.00 every day.
Breathing Techniques:

‘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.

1) Breathing control
2) 3–5 deep breaths
3) Breathing control
4) 2–3 huffs
5) Breathing control
6) Cough

In a relaxed position

Breathing control ‘Belly Breathing.’ 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 1-3 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 think you have phlegm on your chest to clear. If this is painful, try hugging a pillow tightly when coughing.

If you don’t have any phlegm to cough up, then concentrate on cycles of breathing control and deep breathing.

Plymouth Support Services

If you have been advised to continue self-isolating at home there are many local services that can help.

Caring for Plymouth: Support for the medically vulnerable

Specially trained staff will be ready and waiting to take calls on 01752 668000 between 8am and 6pm

Age UK Plymouth - Shop N Drop service, prescription collection service and weekly telephone call with a phone friend to keep you in regular contact with someone. enquiries@ageukplymouth.org.uk

Food Boxes Available: Age UK Plymouth with be taking orders for food boxes which will be available for delivery. Prices start from £10 per box. To place an order please call 01752 253980.

Other Plymouth support services:

- Adult Social Services: 01752 668000
- Improving Lives Plymouth: 01752 201890
- Community Action Helpline: 07786683074
- Extra Help: 01752 424515
- Plymouth Labour Force: 07786683074
You may feel tired but even some basic exercises will be beneficial to your recovery. Start with 6 - 8 repetitions of each activity, gradually increase up to 12 repetitions.

**Bed Exercises**

- Move your ankles up and down
- Push knee into towel and lift your heel off the bed
- Slide your heel along the bed towards your bottom
- Push your knee down into the bed
- Bend your knees & lift your bottom off the bed.
- Pull up your toes and slide your leg out to the side.

**Follow Up After Discharge**

You will receive a follow up telephone call from the Community Respiratory Team to see how your breathing is improving and how your recovery is going at home. They will advise you with how to continue your recovery. If you do not hear from the team within a few days of your discharge please contact your local team:

**Plymouth Community Respiratory Team**
(Inc. South Hams and West Devon):
Tel: 01752 434342

**East and North Cornwall Respiratory Team**
Tel: 01579 373527
Anxiety

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, 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

Understand your anxiety
Try keeping a diary of what you are doing and how you feel at different times to help identify what's affecting you and what you need to take action on.

Challenge your anxious thoughts
Tackling unhelpful thoughts is one of the best things we can do to feel less anxious. Watch the video to find out more.

Make time for worries
If your worry feels 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. Watch the video for more advice.

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

Face the things you want to avoid
It's 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 OK.

Get to grips with the problem
When you're feeling stressed or anxious, it can help to use a problem-solving technique to identify some solutions. This can make the challenges you're facing feel more manageable.

Chair Exercises

Getting out into the chair when you're ready will greatly benefit your lungs, muscles, circulation and digestive system.

March your legs while sitting
Straighten one knee at a time and hold
Cross your arms and turn your head and body left and right.
Bend your arm to touch your shoulder, then straighten.
Lift your arm up above your head then lower.
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.

Lift the leg out to the side, and back to the centre.

Stand up on your toes and gently back down.

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

Squat down as able then stand up tall.

Sit to stand, push up from chair (push up with hands if you need to).

Marching on the spot.

Relaxation and Mindfulness Techniques

While regular exercise is important, you should also take some time to relax both your mind and body.

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 visualizing 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 exercise during this.

Your body has been through a lot so it is important you make time for yourself regularly. 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, Headspace from the app store and Be Mindful is an online course.

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
Being Discharged 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 prescribe the medications required. 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 your travel home, please discuss this with your nurse.

Isolation Guidelines After Discharge

How long until I can go out again?

Once home, you should self isolate for 14 days after the onset of symptoms in order to minimise transmission. This is longer than the 7 days of isolation for individual who remain at home with symptoms, since those admitted to hospital have a higher viral load at the time of illness (meaning you are contagious for a longer period).

Please discuss your particular case with the Doctor discharging you before you leave the hospital.

Can I go out for my daily allowed exercise when home?

Please discuss this with the Doctor discharging you before you leave the hospital.

Exercise Activity Log

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Physical Activity at Home

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, feeding yourself 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, your muscles may be smaller and weaker.

Activities may seem harder and more tiring than you are used to. Patients have found this could lead to them becoming increasingly inactive, or catching up on jobs when they had a good day, which then lead 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, gradually increase up to 12 repetitions.

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

Guide to Physical Activities

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.

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 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.