

Affected by COVID-19?

A self-help guide to managing the effects of the COVID-19 virus and where to turn to if you need further advice

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Introduction

This booklet is for anyone who has had COVID-19 (with or without a positive test), who may or may not have been hospitalised. Please let your family and friends read this leaflet as they can help support you as you recover.

COVID-19 affects everyone in different ways, so not all the information provided will apply to you. Please be mindful of this when using this booklet and if there is ever any doubt about your health, or the impact COVID-19 has had on your health, please contact your normal healthcare provider or NHS 24 (dial 111).

You can contact the **Single Access Point** on **030 33 33 3001** if you still feel you need additional advice or support.

You can find additional information about COVID-19 and symptoms on the NHS Inform website. <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19>

Also look at the Scottish Government website for up to date information on COVID-19. <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/> or the local NHS D&G COVID-19 <http://www.nhsdq.co.uk/covid-19/>

What is the normal recovery pattern?

For most people who have had COVID-19 severely enough to need hospital care, we would expect from experience with other similar bacterial and viral infections that in around;

- 4 weeks - most of the chest pains, and phlegm (sputum) should have reduced
- 6 weeks - cough and feeling breathless should have greatly reduced
- 3 months - most symptoms should have settled but tiredness may still be present
- 6 months - symptoms should have all settled
- Those who were admitted into intensive care will often find that recovery takes longer than this, possibly up to a year.

What you might be feeling

Physically - you may find you:

- Struggle to breathe while being active or at rest
- Are unable to do things you did before you were unwell
- Suffer from extreme tiredness (fatigue) or feel low on energy
- Have trouble sleeping
- Have a cough
- Have noticed changes in your sense of taste or smell
- Have lost your appetite and/or lost weight
- Suffer from muscle weakness, aches or pains

Skin - you may notice:

- A rash on your face/hands (this may be due to the increased hand washing, use of alcohol-based hand gel and use of masks). **It is important to regularly moisturise the skin to keep it hydrated.**

Mentally - you may notice you:

- Are more forgetful
- Are unable to think clearly
- Struggle with daily tasks that involve organising, planning and problem solving

Emotionally - you may find you:

- Feel anxious, worried or low in mood
- Feel overwhelmed
- Struggle to cope with the effects of the illness, and the pandemic

These symptoms are all normal after experiencing COVID-19 and this guide outlines some of the ways in which these can be improved upon. It is also important to remember that you may experience symptoms other than those listed here.

If you feel you are not improving in one or more of the factors above, please get in touch with us via the Single Access Point on 030 33 33 3001 to seek further advice and support.

Breathlessness

Ongoing shortness of breath is common when you have had a respiratory illness such as COVID-19.

Breathlessness can be uncomfortable and frightening and can limit your usual activities.

If you are breathless you may notice that: -

- Your chest feels tight
- You find it difficult to catch your breath
- It is hard to control your breathing
- You are breathing more quickly and using extra muscles to help
- You tire quickly
- You feel anxious or panicky

It is important to recognise that this can be part of the normal recovery process. Try not to avoid the things that make you feel breathlessness. Instead, there are many things you can do to help control and improve your breathlessness – some of these techniques are explained here.

Pursed-lips Breathing

Breathe in through your nose, and then out through your mouth with your lips pursed, like you are whistling. This helps to slow your breathing down.

Keeping your lungs clear of phlegm:

It is important that you clear phlegm from your lungs regularly to help your breathing and prevent lung damage.

The active cycle of breathing is an exercise which helps to move phlegm from deep inside your lungs.

The technique can be performed when sitting or in bed with your head in an upright position.

- Take 2-3 big breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth
- Then 3 relaxed breaths
- Take another 2-3 big breaths
- Follow this with 2-3 huffs and a cough if required (A huff is a technique when you breath out sharply – as if you are steaming up a mirror with your mouth open and relaxed)
- Rest and repeat as required

Moving around your home will help to loosen your phlegm. Keeping well hydrated is very important to prevent your phlegm from becoming sticky and difficult to clear.

Breathlessness

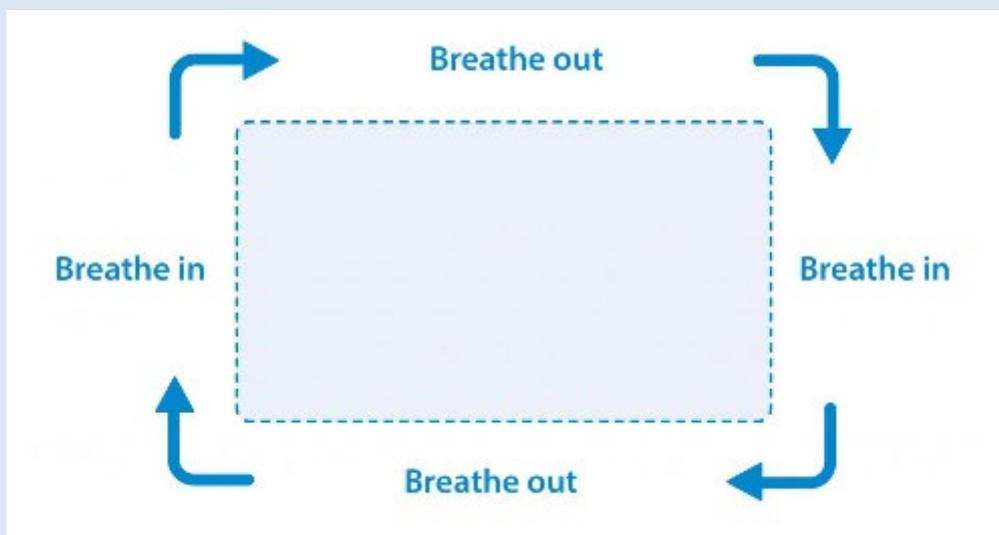
Breathing Control or “Tummy Breathing”

When you are breathless, there is a tendency to mouth breathe and breathe into your upper chest rather than your tummy. If this isn't corrected as you recover you will develop bad breathing habits which may cause unpleasant symptoms.

1. Lie comfortably on your back with a pillow under your head and knees or sit comfortably on a chair. Place one hand on your stomach, with the other hand relaxed by your side.
2. Gently close your mouth, lips together and keep your jaw loose.
3. Breathe in gently through your nose, feeling your tummy rise and expand 'like a balloon' as you breathe in. The breath should be unforced and silent. When you breathe in, your upper chest should be relaxed and not moving.
4. Breathe out lightly through your nose if possible, without pushing, keeping your stomach relaxed.
5. Make sure you relax and pause at the end of each breath out.

Rectangular Breathing

Follow the sides of the rectangle with your eyes as you use relaxed tummy breathing. Gradually slow the speed at which your eyes move around the edge of the rectangle to slow your breathing.



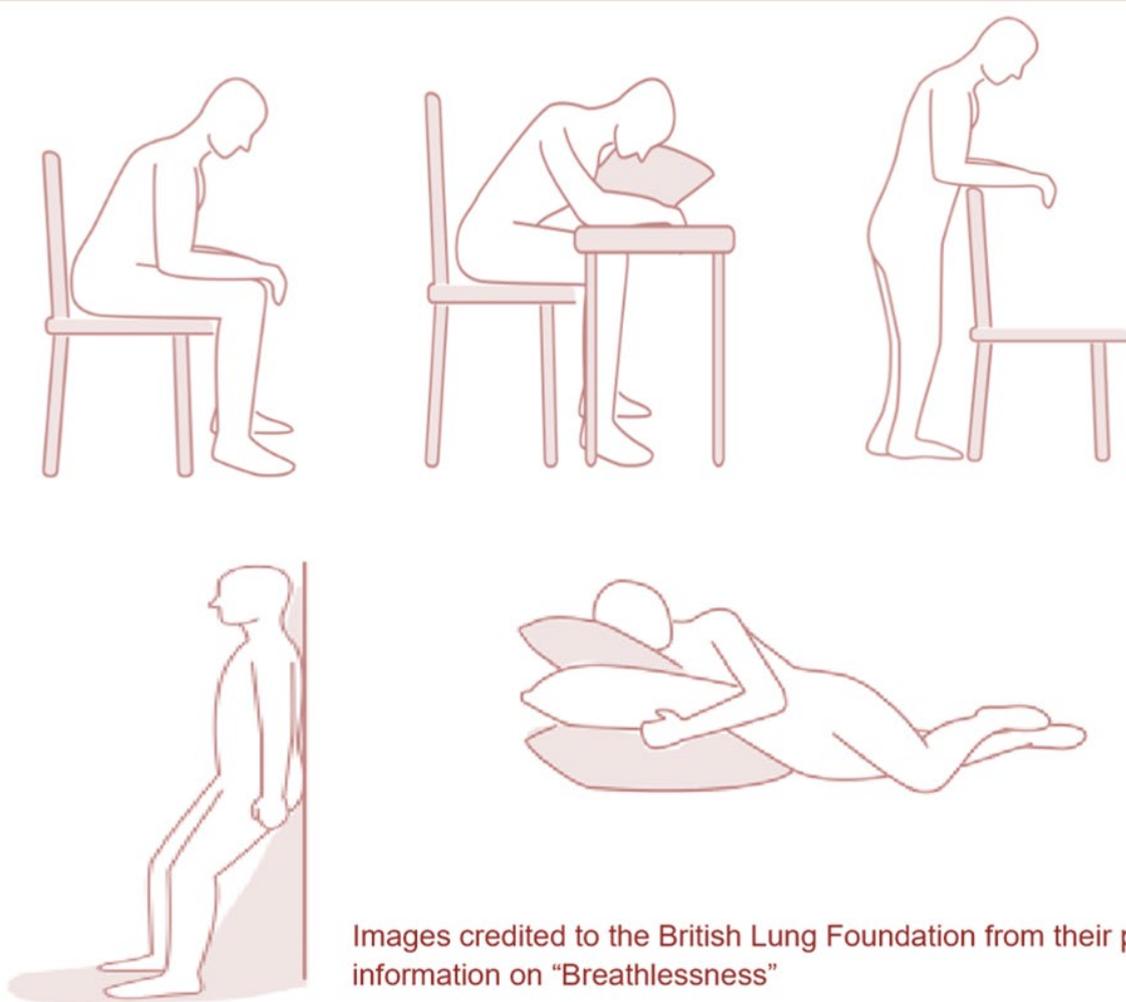
Breathlessness

Positions to aid breathlessness:

Here are some suggestions to try. They are based on The British Lung Foundation's Breathlessness Management advice. Further information can be found at

<https://www.blf.org.uk/sites/default/files/BK29%20Breathlessness%202020%20v3%20downloadable%20PDF%20%281%29.pdf>

Everyone is different, so see what works for you!



Images credited to the British Lung Foundation from their patient information on "Breathlessness"

Cough and Voice

Cough

Your cough may persist for some time following Covid 19.

If you have a dry, non-productive cough (no longer bringing up secretions) then you can try the following when you feel a cough coming on:

- Take a sharp sniff (to open up the vocal folds) then blow out sharply twice (like blowing out two candles)

Throat-Clearing

You may feel the urge to throat-clear. Try not to as this can irritate and damage the vocal folds.

- Sip water instead of throat-clearing
- Effortful dry swallow instead of throat-clearing if you don't have access to water



Voice

Your voice quality may have changed if you are coughing or throat clearing a lot and/or if you have been intubated whilst in hospital.

- Frequent sips of water throughout the day improve vocal fold movement, leading to better voice quality.
- Speak at normal volume and with low effort. Never force your voice.
- Try to manage symptoms of other throat irritants such as acid reflux, respiratory conditions, post nasal drip, smoking etc.
- Cut down on high fat, spicy and acidic foods. Reduce alcohol and fizzy drinks. Don't eat too much all at once and avoid lying down after eating.

Next Steps

If you have ongoing voice, cough and swallowing changes for more than 3 weeks and/or if you were intubated because of COVID-19, you may have structural changes to your larynx (voice box). If any of these symptoms last longer than 3 weeks then please seek further professional advice and referral to a Speech and Language Therapist via the **Single Access Point** on **030 33 33 3001**.

Staying Active

It is important to rest until you are symptom free (usually for the first 10 days). Once you start to feel better you can start increasing your activity levels.

You can increase the number of repetitions of each exercise when you can complete these and have no after effects after 24-48 hours. Start with 5 minute sessions and build it up as able to 30- 60 minute sessions.

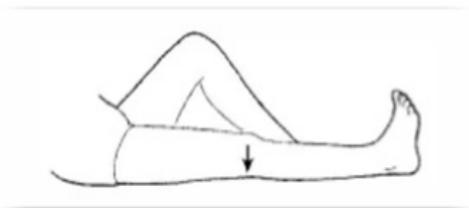
Listen to your body – if it feels too much then stop and try again a few days later. Pacing can help you achieve more by conserving your energy and controlling your fitness. You may experience an increase in your fatigue after exercising and as you start to do more of your previous activities such as housework, shopping and returning to work. Be mindful of your fatigue levels after this and adjust your activities as required. You may need to think balancing your activity with rest periods.

The following are suggestions of early activities that you can complete:



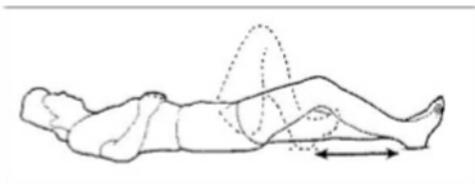
1. Sitting or lying.

- Briskly bend and straighten your ankles
- Repeat 5 times



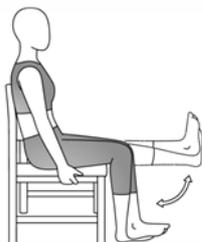
2. Lying on your back or lying with your head in upright position.

- Pull your ankle up towards you and push your knee down into the bed
- Hold for 5 seconds
- Then relax
- Repeat 5 times



3. Lying on your back or lying with your head in an upright position.

- Bend and straighten your leg
- Repeat 5 times



4. Sit on a chair.

- Pull your toes up, tighten your thigh muscle and straighten your knee
- Hold approx. 5 seconds and then slowly relax your leg
- Repeat 5 times



5. Sitting on a chair

- Lift your leg up off the seat keeping the knee bent. Return to starting position.
- Repeat 5 times

(Images from Physiotherapy Tools)

Keeping active is important to help your recovery and improve your breathlessness. Any activity that gets you moderately out of breath is beneficial. It is normal to get breathless on exertion.

Try not to get so breathless that you are unable to speak. Slow down and pace your activity until your breathing improves.

Fatigue and Managing Activities of Daily Life

Fatigue

When you have been unwell, you can often find that you feel tired quicker than normal, your muscles may feel weaker and your mobility level may be affected. Therefore, it is important to try and get you back to your normal activities and to remain as active as possible within your limitations.

Fatigue is an overall feeling of tiredness, exhaustion or lack of energy. It's completely normal to experience it from time to time. But sometimes it can linger for weeks or months after you've been sick.

Initially



Rest - Rest is very important for your body as it fights off infection. You need to rest both your body and mind. Keep television, phones and social media to a minimum. Relaxation, breathing and meditation can all support quality rest – the NHS Apps library has free tools you can try. Sensory relaxation tools such as fragrances, blankets and relaxing music can also help. If a strategy doesn't work for you try another one until you find one that does.



Sleep - You may find that you need to sleep more. Make sure you follow healthy sleep habits: ensure your room is as dark as possible, have a bedtime routine and avoid caffeine, eating late and using electrical items before bed.



Nourishment - Try to keep your normal routine for eating and drinking. Being ill with a temperature can make you dehydrated so make sure you drink fluid when you're thirsty and enough so that you pass urine with normal frequency and volume.



Move - get up and move around slowly and gently a few times each day. This will keep your body mobile and help with circulation.



Keep activity levels low - Both physical and cognitive (thinking) activities use energy. Try to do only a small number of these activities each day, including basic activities of daily living, such as washing and dressing.

Fatigue and Managing Activities of Daily Life

Next Steps



Try activities - If you still feel fatigued after self-isolation but overall you're improving, keep being gentle with yourself. Slowly try a small amount of light activity that is manageable (probably less than you think) with regular rests. Be mindful that you may feel more tired the next day. Be realistic and kind to yourself.



Rest - Your body still needs rest to continue healing so take short breaks throughout the day even if you don't feel like you need to. Stop and do nothing calm your mind and try breathing or guided relaxation techniques.



Daily routine - Routine helps your body to stabilise itself. Slowly resume your routine for sleeping eating and daily activities. If this isn't possible, create a realistic one to follow for now and gradually adjust back to your normal routine. Remember, **don't rush**. If you're having difficulty sleeping check out the tips and advice from NHS Every Mind Matters.



'Thinking' activities - Continue to limit everyday 'thinking' activities, such as emails, planning shopping, making decisions, as these all use energy. Try to do them only for set times with regular rest in between.



Slowly increase activity levels - People often increase activity levels too quickly, which can set them back. Occupational therapists working with people with long-term fatigue may only increase activity levels every couple of weeks. So, go slow and steady with activities and avoid pushing through fatigue.



Work - You may need longer off work than initially anticipated. A phased return works best which is planned with your manager and, if you have one, your Occupational Health Department. You may also need a fit note from your GP. Try to avoid returning to work too soon and without the adjustments that you need to manage fatigue.



Have fun - Remember the fun things in life. Often people only prioritise things that seem necessary as they return to daily life, but it's important to have a balance. Allow others to help with day-to-day tasks so you can save energy for the activities you enjoy.

(Images and information from Royal College of Occupational Therapy's 'Post Viral Fatigue')

Fatigue and Managing Activities of Daily Life

Managing Fatigue

Energy conservation can help you build up your strength so that you can take part in your daily activities and other things you enjoy doing.

Learning to conserve your energy is all about finding a good balance between work, rest and leisure in order to decrease the amount of energy demand on your body.

The Four Principles of Energy Conservation

Plan

- Plan a daily activity schedule and schedule rest periods
- Break the task down into stages
- Eliminate unnecessary steps of a task, e.g. minimise frequency of going up and down stairs during the day
- Set realistic goals

Prioritise

- Prioritise your daily routine and activities
- What tasks **have** to be done?
- What is most important to you?

Position

- Sit down for your activities whenever possible, e.g. on a stool
- Avoid tasks that require prolonged standing, squatting or stooping.
- Support your elbows or forearms on a firm surface while you work
- Organise work areas so that everything you need is within reach to avoid any unnecessary reaching, bending and stooping
- Good posture – Keep your body straight while performing a task as poor posture consumes more energy

Pace

- Allow ample time to finish an activity
- Pace yourself, keep a slow and steady pace and don't rush
- Listen to your body and rest before you become exhausted
- Have sufficient rest after completing a task and before moving onto the next one

Fatigue and Managing Activities of Daily Life

Practical examples: -

Making the bed		
Pace	Plan	Prioritise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Put on the sheet, stop for a rest, then the pillowcases, then rest again ➤ Sit for some of the task, such as doing the pillows ➤ Get help with the duvet cover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Have your bed positioned so that you can walk all the way around it ➤ Start and finish one side, then move to the other so you only circle the bed once 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Can you take turns with someone you live with, or can someone else make the bed instead?

Cooking		
Pace	Plan	Prioritise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Spread the preparation throughout the day. Peel vegetables in the morning, cook in the afternoon and reheat in the evening ➤ Sit to prepare food or when waiting to stir ➤ Take rests during and after cooking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cook large amounts and refrigerate or freeze extra portions ➤ Get everything you need ready before you start ➤ Find recipes with a short preparation time ➤ Use a trolley to move cooking equipment or cutlery for the table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Buy frozen ready meals for days when you are very tired ➤ Can a member of your household cook for you?

Try keeping an activity diary to record your day-to-day activities in order to help you pace, plan and prioritise your energy expenditure. It may also allow you to keep a record of what you feel like after doing certain activities to see if there is a pattern.

Support and information is available to people affected by ME/CFS and Fibromyalgia Network (DGMEFM) by visiting www.dgmefm.org.uk or phoning 07437 602610

Sleep

Sleep problems

During any illness it's common to sleep more as your body fights the infection. While you're recovering it's also common to have disturbed sleep patterns. You may struggle to get back into a good routine.

You can get back to a better sleeping pattern by:

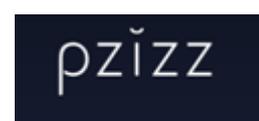
- Having a comfortable bedroom temperature
- Making sure your bedroom is dark – blackout blinds can help
- Taking time to relax later in the evening
- Getting ready for bed at the same time each night
- Avoiding screens – like phones or laptops – for at least 2 hours before bed
- Trying to get up at roughly the same time every day
- Avoiding caffeinated drinks – like tea and coffee – before bed
- Trying not to snack or eat a large meal late in the evening
- Setting aside time during the day to write down any worries you have
- Discussing your worries with family and friends if you feel able
- Keeping a 'sleep diary' to help you work out what helps and what doesn't help you get a good night's sleep



If you can't get to sleep within half an hour of going to bed, get up and relax in another room until you feel tired again.

If you're feeling very tired during the day and are struggling to stay awake, a 30 minute 'power nap' can help. It shouldn't affect your sleep at night as long as it's not too late in the day

Additional Information and Apps



NHS Inform: "Sleep problems and Insomnia self help guide"

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/mental-health/mental-health-self-help-guides/sleep-problems-and-insomnia-self-help-guide>

Nutrition and Diet

Your diet, nutritional and fluid intake are very important when you have had COVID-19, and the symptoms can affect your appetite and ability to eat, making it difficult for you to meet your nutritional needs. If you are struggling to eat enough, or if you are losing weight or strength in your muscles, you may need to think differently about the foods you are eating. If you can, keep an eye on your weight. You may notice loss of weight if your jewellery and clothes have become looser.

Tips for Making the Most of Your Food

Eating well when you've lost your appetite can be difficult; you could try some of the ideas listed here:

- Eat more of the foods that you enjoy at the times of day when you feel more like eating
- Eat smaller meals with snacks and nourishing drinks in between (e.g. smoothies, soups, fruit juice, milkshakes or hot chocolate)
- Avoid drinking before or during meals, as the liquid can fill you up
- Add ingredients such as cream, cheese, butter, olive oil, cream cheese, milk powder and ground almonds to foods like soups, stews, curries, scrambled eggs, vegetables, potatoes
- Add honey, syrup and jams to porridge, milky puddings, on bread, toast or tea cakes
- Fortify your usual milk by whisking 2-4 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder into 1 pint of milk
- If you usually use low fat, low sugar 'diet' foods and drinks, switch to the non-diet ones (e.g. whole milk) and have some treats such as a piece of cake, chocolate, a handful of nuts, a biscuit between meals or as a snack
- Powdered nutritional supplement drinks are available from most supermarkets and pharmacies as well as online, and can be used between meals to help you to get the extra nutrition you need whilst you are feeling unwell

The free leaflet 'Your Guide to Making the Most of Your Food' contains more tips and ideas to help you get the most nutrition from your food:

https://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/pleaflet_yellow.pdf

If you have diabetes or heart disease, some of the tips above may not be suitable for you. Speak to your healthcare professional for further advice.

Nutrition and Diet

Tips for Eating if you are Short of Breath

- Eat smaller portions more frequently
- Choose softer, moist foods that are easier to chew and swallow
- Take your time during eating

Tips for Managing a Dry Mouth

- Try to drink six to eight cups of fluid each day (including nourishing fluids such as milky drinks or juices)
- Add sauces such as gravy, mayonnaise, salad cream and cheese sauce to foods
- Suck sugar-free sweets or chew sugar-free gum to help saliva production

Tips for Managing Changes to Taste and Smell

- Experiment with herbs, spices, pepper, chutneys and pickles in cooking
- Try cold foods instead
- If you go off a particular food, try it again regularly as your tastes may continue to change

Cognitive Communication

Cognitive-communication changes can occur after having a virus such as COVID-19.

You may experience some difficulties with your thinking and when you are talking. These difficulties may include:

- Difficulty putting your thoughts and feelings into words.
- Problems thinking of words or names.
- Losing your train of thought, for instance when telling a story.
- Difficulty following conversation, especially when in a group of people.
- Reading books, your mail, e-mails or other written information.
- Finding it hard keeping up with what people are saying on the TV or radio.
- Finding it harder to concentrate or more easily distracted.

These are all normal during your body's recovery from the virus. With rest and time, these issues can resolve.

What can help?

- Minimise background distractions where possible to help you stay focussed: turn off the radio or TV, sit somewhere quieter.
- When you can't think of the word you want to say, talk around the subject, give clues. For instance, say what it's used for, where you find it, what it looks like. This may help you to think of the word yourself or it will help the listener realise what you're trying to say.
- Keep a list of names, places or words that you keep forgetting.
- Ask people to talk a little slower and to talk one at a time.
- It may be easier to read shorter pieces of text, for instance headlines or short paragraphs from magazines, newspapers, on the internet.
- Try some word based activities, for instance word searches, easy crosswords, puzzle books. Board games, e.g. Taboo, Pictionary or charades.

If you are continuing to experience difficulties, then please seek further professional advice and referral to a Speech & Language Therapist via the **Single Access Point on 030 33 33 3001**.

Memory and Thinking

Most people who have had COVID-19 will recover with no long-term impact on their memory and concentration. Some people experience mild difficulties that don't last for long.

Other people, particularly those who have had a severe illness and been admitted to intensive care, may find problems last longer.

People who had some memory problems before becoming ill may find that they worsen afterwards. These changes may be mild and may not last for long. Reasons why COVID-19 affects memory and thinking include fatigue, fear and anxiety around the pandemic and your health, low mood, and, in some cases, brain inflammation.

Memory:

If your memory is affected, you may find it difficult to hold information in your head in order to use it to make decisions based on that information. You may struggle to recall something that has happened, or forget to take medication on time.



Attention and Concentration:

Problems with attention/concentration can make it hard to focus and ignore distractions. So, it may be difficult to help your child/grandchild with homework, or hold a conversation, whilst the TV is on, or keep up with conversations that are fast-paced or involve more than one other person. It may be more difficult to do two things at the same time and not be distracted when trying to concentrate on a task.



Executive Functions:

Executive functions are the mental processes that allow us to solve problems, make decisions, plan ahead, and see tasks through to completion. For example, executive functions are needed to deal with problems, organise a holiday, get the car fixed or find a new job. You may find it difficult to get going on tasks, or you may start a task but not see it through, perhaps getting distracted by something irrelevant and not noticing that you have drifted off-task.



Memory and Thinking

The first step to managing problems with memory and thinking is to accept that you have them. Particularly if you haven't had any formal testing or explanation, which is common, it can be hard to accept that the problems you are having are real. Discussing the problems with those around you, family, friends or colleagues, also allows you to ask them to help you at home. You can ask family or friends to remind you to do a task on a particular day or time. Techniques you can try to manage your memory and thinking problems are explained below.

Managing Memory Problems

- Use your phone's calendar app to automatically remind you when you have to do things – from sending a birthday card to putting the rubbish bins out.
- If you don't have a mobile phone, or your phone doesn't have a calendar app or reminders, then get yourself a paper calendar then add things to it and get into the habit of checking it at regular times of the day.
- You can enter notes into your phone, either by typing a note in or by using a voice recorder.
- You can also use the phone's camera to capture visual information that you need to remember.

Managing Attention and Concentration Problems



- Reduce distractions. If you are trying to do something demanding like fill out a complicated form, find a time and place that is quiet and ask others around you not to disturb you.
- Listen to gentle instrumental music. Search music streaming platforms for “focus” or “concentration” playlists and see what works for you.
- Plan regular breaks
- Mix interesting tasks with less interesting tasks

Managing Executive Problems



- Set up a regular routine that will reduce the demands on your brain. Think through all the things you want to do regularly every day, put them into a schedule, and practice this routine until it becomes second nature.
- Plan - Make a clear plan before starting any new or complicated task. Break the task down into all the steps you need to take before starting.
- Stop and think – try and establish a habit of pausing during any complicated activity and take a moment to think.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

COVID-19 and the restrictions that have been put in place mean you cannot go about your normal day-to-day activities. If you have had COVID-19 you may also be experiencing different feelings. These scenarios can cause a range of feelings such as fear, anxiety, low mood, frustration and stress. These are normal responses due to being physically unwell as well as all of the other stressors around at the moment.

Remember, everyone responds differently and it is ok to feel the way you do. What is important is to help you find ways to manage your mental health and wellbeing. Here are some ways in which this can be done...

Get Back to Normal Activities

Set yourself some achievable goals in starting to do things you used to enjoy such as gardening or DIY. This will help give you feelings of accomplishment.

Try to keep to a daily routine with healthy eating, drinking and sleep patterns.



Keep Busy

When you feel particularly anxious, try distracting yourself by going for a walk or calling a friend.

Staying physically active can also help lift your mood.



Stay Connected

Even if you can't physically meet up with friends and family, don't withdraw from life. Talking to others can improve your mood.

Listening is the most important part of communication, so ask others about their lives and they will probably be interested to hear about your recovery.



Mental Health and Wellbeing

Relaxation

Relaxing is often easier said than done when you are feeling anxious and different approaches work for different people.

- **Visualisation**

Find a place (real or imagined) to create a picture of in your mind that brings about a sense of calm or relaxation. It might be a blue ocean, a beach, a forest or field or somewhere you have been on holiday. What can you see, hear and smell? Can you feel the sun on your skin or a cool breeze across your face? You will be able to recognise this when you notice you start to breathe more slowly, or your shoulders begin to relax.

- **Mindfulness Meditation**

The main aim is to focus your attention on the present moment and to keep bringing your attention back to this even when it wanders off onto worries and physical symptoms. It takes some time and patience to learn but there are many websites online and apps that can guide you.

Set a 'Worry Time'

Trying not to think about worries is likely to just make them worse. An alternative is to schedule a particular time in the day when you will think about worries. Then if a worrying thought pops into your mind, day or night, note it down and continue doing what you were doing and come back to it in your 'worry time'.



Further information can be found at:

[nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/moodzone-mental-wellbeing-audio-guidesnhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/anxiety](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/moodzone-mental-wellbeing-audio-guidesnhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/anxiety)

If you would find it more beneficial to speak to someone then services are available through your GP or mental health charities such as:

- **Helplines: NHS 24** – phone 111
Monday – Sunday 6pm – 2am
- **Breathing Space** – phone 0800 838587
Monday- Thursday 6pm-2am and Friday 6pm to Monday 6am
- **Samaritans** phone 116123- 24 hours a day 365 days of the year
- **Scottish Association for Mental Health** information service phone 0344 8000550 Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm (not bank holidays)

Finances and Additional Support

With so many aspects of life being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, you may be finding it more difficult to pay bills or have additional money worries. Some useful information which can help is listed below.

Financial difficulties and Benefits

Universal Credit is replacing many of the existing benefits so it is worthwhile applying for this benefit as opposed to the others in the first instance. The eligibility criteria for this benefit is listed on the Citizen's Advice Bureau Scotland's website: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you-s/> and if eligible the application form is available on the Gov.UK website.

The Scottish Welfare Fund can offer emergency aid to help pay towards the cost of food, gas and electricity bills due to financial hardship as a result of COVID-19. To apply for this benefit you need to go to the Dumfries and Galloway Council website and complete the online application form.

Housing Support

Dumfries and Galloway Council's Homeless Housing Services can refer you onto ILS (Independent Living Support) service if you require assistance to find suitable accommodation, move into and furnish new accommodation, manage your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and offer help with budgeting, debt or benefits claims.

You are entitled to accommodation from Dumfries and Galloway Council if you are: sleeping rough, staying with friends or family with no home of your own, are living in poor conditions which affect your health, are at risk of violence in your home, are living in overcrowded conditions or are living in a home which is unsuitable due to your illness or disability.

Homeless Housing Dept- 03033 33 3000 or ILS e-mail:
enquiries@ilsdumfries.co.uk

Shelter Scotland- offers useful advice on paying rent, eviction, claiming benefits, paying utility bills etc as a result of COVID-19 and have the option of chatting to online advisors through their website-

https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/scottish_housing_advice_coronavirus_COVID_19 or phoning their free phone number **0808 800 4444**.

Finances and Additional Support

Foodbanks in D & G

The Trussell Trust: <https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/emergency-food/food-parcel/>

To get help from a food bank you may need to be referred with a voucher that you can exchange for food. Contact details for all the offices are listed on the above website.

First Base: <https://www.firstbasedumfries.co.uk/>

Covering Dumfries and Galloway, except for the Wigtownshire area. They do not need proof of hardship. Tel contact details: 01387 279 680 or e-mail: info@firstbase.co.uk

#Support DG
www.dumgal.gov

Support for School and Childcare
Support for Local Businesses
Support for Employment
Support for Communities



Returning to Work

The longer-term effects of COVID-19 will be different for everyone. Your return to work will depend on:

- how you're feeling
- the type of job you do
- the level of flexibility offered by your employer

It's important that you work with your employer to manage your return to work. Some people will need a phased return to work following recovery from COVID-19. A phased return means you gradually build up your hours and days at work. Where available, take advice from your Occupational Health department or, talk to your line manager.

If you're self-employed, try and pace yourself, especially if you're fatigued. Try not to return to work too quickly following your illness.

When you return to work, you may find yourself feeling more tired. This is normal. During this time, it's important that you try and pace yourself both at work and at home. The information about Energy Conservation and Fatigue management nearer the beginning of this booklet may also assist you in returning to work.

If you have been furloughed from your work, have been made unemployed or are working from home and have questions about returning to your work or what you are entitled to then the ACAS website <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus> has advice on furlough and pay, shielding, working from home and safety at work.

The Citizen's Advice Bureau has guidance on returning to work in line with current Government restrictions and health advice. This information, and more, can be found at: - <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you-s/>



How to Seek Additional Specialist Support

The impact of being hospitalised and/or being seriously unwell can be different for everyone.

If, after following the advice in this booklet, you still find that any of the aspects discussed are not improving for you, such as:

- Breathlessness
- Reduced Mobility and Exercise Tolerance
- Voice, Cough or Swallowing difficulties
- Fatigue Levels
- Difficulties returning to previous activities of daily life and work
- Problems with Memory and thinking
- Anxiety and/or Low mood
- Ongoing nutritional intake and dietary problems

Please phone us via our local **Single Access Point** where you will be assessed further to ensure you are directed to the correct information and/or specialist support from a health professional:



Single Access Point
030 33 33 3001

Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm
(Outwith these hours please call NHS 24 on 111)

However, if your condition is worsening or you require urgent medical advice then please contact your GP, NHS 24 or if it's an emergency, call 999

