

# Covid Rehabilitation

## How to get back to normality

HEALTH  
HUB



COVID-19 is an illness caused by a virus called coronavirus. Symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are very similar to symptoms of other illnesses, such as colds and flu.

These include:

- A high temperature or shivering (chills) – a high temperature means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- A new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours
- A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling tired or exhausted
- An aching body
- A headache
- A sore throat
- A blocked or runny nose
- Loss of appetite
- Diarrhoea
- Feeling sick or being sick

You can usually treat mild coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms at home. If your symptoms are severe, you may need medical care until you recover.

There are areas of wellbeing in which we can look to help your recovery from COVID-19 and return back to normality, these are:

### NUTRITION

Many people experience loss of appetite and reduced food intake when unwell with COVID and during their recovery. It is normal to feel tired after being unwell, and recovery can take time.

You may find that you have difficulties with shopping, preparing food and difficulty eating your normal portion sizes. This may be because you feel tired or weak. You may have some new symptoms associated with COVID like smell and taste changes, shortness of breath dry mouth, nausea and constipation.

This can make it difficult to get the right nutrition you need to help you do your day-to-day activities and could delay recovery.

### **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO EAT WELL AFTER BEING DIAGNOSED WITH COVID?**

Eating well is important as your body needs energy, protein, vitamins and minerals to help you recover. Having a good intake of protein and energy rich foods supports you with rebuilding muscles, maintaining your immune system and increasing your energy levels to allow you to do your usual activities.

### **I AM UNDERWEIGHT OR I HAVE LOST A LOT OF WEIGHT OR I AM STRUGGLING TO EAT ENOUGH. WHAT SHOULD I EAT?**

Minimising weight loss and regaining muscle strength is important for your recovery. It is important to monitor your weight and look out for signs of weight loss like your clothes and becoming loose.

You may find meals a bit overwhelming at the moment but you should try to eat little and often this may include three small nourishing meals plus nourishing snacks/drinks in between until your appetite picks up.

Choose protein-rich (meat, fish, eggs, cheese, beans and lentils) and energy-rich foods. Serve food on small plates to make it more appealing.

Keep well hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids. Choose milk-based drinks as these provide additional nutrients like protein.

# Covid Rehabilitation

## How to get back to normality

HEALTH  
HUB

### **SHOULD I BE TAKING ANY VITAMIN OR MINERAL SUPPLEMENTS?**

Multivitamin and mineral supplement – if you are only eating small amounts or are unable to eat all the recommended food groups then you may wish to consider taking a multivitamin and mineral supplement. If you have been advised to take an oral nutritional supplement drink, these will contain vitamins and minerals.

#### **Vitamin D**

If you are not well enough to spend time outside regularly, or if you are over 65, or have a darker skin tone, your body may not be able to make enough vitamin D. In these situations, take a daily Vitamin D supplement containing 10 micrograms daily. You can buy these from most supermarkets and pharmacies.

### **I HAVE TASTE/SMELL CHANGES, SHORTNESS OF BREATH, DRY MOUTH OR TIREDNESS THAT AFFECT WHAT AND HOW MUCH I CAN EAT, WHAT CAN I DO?**

Not everyone will experience the following symptoms of COVID. If you do experience them, these tips may help. If this continues to be a problem, ask your GP to refer you to a dietitian for further advice and support.

- **Taste and smell changes**

These are usually short-term but can still have a significant effect on your food intake. Even though you are unable to taste / smell your foods try to stick to a balanced diet with a good protein content.

- **Short of breath**

Try to eat little and often. Maybe have drinks in-between meals instead of with your meals. Soft and moist food can be easier to manage when you are tired or feeling breathless.

- **Dry mouth**

Take regular sips of fluids throughout the day. Add sauces to foods such as gravy, cheese/white sauce, mayonnaise, salad cream, yoghurt or dips. Suck on sugar-free sweets or chew sugar free gum to help increase saliva production.

If your mouth is sore, contact your GP/pharmacist who may be able to request or prescribe medication to treat this.

- **Tiredness**

Take your time at mealtimes. Soft and moist food can be easier to manage when you are tired or feeling breathless. Ready meals can be helpful if you are too tired to cook.

- **Constipation**

You may experience constipation as a side effect to the medication you have been prescribed or due to being less active than normal. Keep well hydrated. Aim for six-eight glasses of fluid throughout the day. Choose foods higher in fibre, such as, porridge oats, nuts, seeds, beans and pulses and fruit and vegetables.

If its uncomfortable, speak to your pharmacist who may be able to prescribe a suitable laxative.

### **HOW CAN I EAT WELL TO SUPPORT A RETURN TO MY USUAL ACTIVITY OR EXERCISE?**

Whatever weight you may be now, getting back some of the muscle you have lost can help give you more energy and strength to slowly become more physically active again. To help fuel your activity, you will need to ensure you have sufficient energy (calories) and protein.

### **DAILY LIFESTYLE ACTIVITIES**

As you recover from COVID you might be experiencing symptoms such as fatigue and breathlessness or changes in your mood and thinking. These symptoms are common after an illness. You might find that these symptoms affect your ability to complete everyday activities, such as getting washed and dressed, and doing tasks around the home. Activities that are usually simple might seem like hard work, and you may feel that you have less energy than usual.

### **I'M FINDING MY NORMAL ACTIVITIES MORE DIFFICULT THAN USUAL. WHAT CAN I DO?**

There are lots of simple things you can do to help yourself. Getting enough sleep and making sure you eat well will both help. It is important to conserve your energy when you are completing your everyday tasks to help make sure that you have enough energy throughout the day. Try following the 3 P's:

# Covid Rehabilitation

## How to get back to normality

HEALTH  
HUB

### Pace

- Give yourself permission to slow down. Don't expect to be able to do everything at once, or at the same pace you used to. Do less than you think you can.
- Break activities into smaller tasks and spread them throughout the day. You'll recover faster if you work on a task until you are tired, rather than completely exhausted.
- Build rests into your tasks and plan rest breaks between activities. Resting is key to recharging your energy.

### Plan

- Look at the activities you normally do on a daily and weekly basis; develop a plan to spread these evenly across the week.
- Think about which activities you find most tiring and make sure you spread these out, with plenty of time to rest in between.
- Don't try to complete several activities all in one go. This will drain your energy, and you will need more time to recover afterwards.
- If you find that your energy is lower or concentrating is harder at certain times of day, plan to avoid tiring activities at these times.
- Think about ways you can do activities differently to make it easier and less tiring. For example, you could sit down during tasks like washing and getting dressed. Rather than lifting and carrying items when cooking, try pushing and sliding them across the work surface instead.
- Rearrange rooms like the kitchen so the items you use most are easy to reach.
- Simple pieces of equipment can make lots of daily tasks easier to manage.

### Prioritise

- Some daily activities are necessary but others aren't. There might be some tasks that you can stop, do less often or ask someone to help you with, until you are feeling better.
- Make sure you have a balance of the necessary

tasks but also things you need to do, like washing and getting dressed and things you want to do for fun and enjoyment.

- Start the day by asking:
  1. What do I need to do and what do I want to do today?
  2. What can I put off until another day?
  3. What can I ask someone else to help me with?

### WHEN WILL I GET BACK TO NORMAL?

We are still learning about the different ways that COVID affects people and how people recover from it. Your recovery may depend on things like how sick you were with the virus, whether you have other health issues, whether you went into hospital and whether you were in intensive care.

Some of your symptoms might go away quite quickly, whilst others may take much longer to improve. Be patient with yourself, think about moving forwards gradually and steadily, and ask for support if you need it.

### SLEEP

Many people recovering from COVID notice that their sleep has changed when compared to their sleep before they became unwell.

Some people find it difficult to fall asleep or stay asleep, and others find they wake up earlier than usual and can't get back to sleep. It might be that you are waking up feeling unrefreshed, like you haven't slept at all.

### WHY MIGHT SLEEP BE AFFECTED BY COVID?

There are many reasons why your sleep may have changed as a result of COVID:

- A lack of natural daylight can interfere with the production of a chemical in our brain called melatonin. It is this chemical that makes us feel sleepy.
- The medications that have been used to treat you can impact on your sleep too.

The experience of being in a hospital setting can also disrupt the natural sleep cycle because:

- Hospitals are noisy, busy places. There are always



# Covid Rehabilitation

## How to get back to normality

HEALTH  
HUB

### THE DREAM COMPLETION TECHNIQUE

If you are dreaming about your experience of being unwell, it is important to remember that it is in the past and what is happening is just a dream. They are your dreams and you are in charge of what happens. It is okay for you to change what happens and know that there is nothing to fear in your dream. If you do not remember the dream just the unpleasant feeling you have when you are woken up, you can still use this technique by thinking about an alternative feeling that would feel better.

1. Think about your most recent nightmare or bad sleep experience; you don't need to analyse what it means or re-live the whole thing. Just think about the point where you woke up.
2. What would you want to happen next in the dream that feels good?
  - Take some time on this – what we are looking for is a new direction for the dream to take – something brief and simple and just as powerful as the bad dream.
  - While bad dreams can feel very real to you, remember dreams do not follow the same rules as real life so your imagined solution does not need to be something that could happen in reality.
  - It could be a way of gaining complete control in a way that maybe you couldn't when you were unwell with COVID.
3. Write down your solution, read it and imagine a different ending to your dream.
4. Your dreams themselves may or may not change through this technique, but you can reduce their power over you by changing the ending of the dreams when you are awake.

### WHAT DO I DO IF THIS DOES NOT SEEM TO HELP?

If none of the tips above seem to be helping, do make an appointment with your GP and they will discuss the options with you.

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



After a period of illness and inactivity, your muscles will be much weaker than normal and you will certainly be less fit than you were. It is important to get back to your previous level of activity or possibly aim to be more active!

### HOW WILL I KNOW IF I AM LESS FIT THAN I WAS?

You will find doing everyday jobs that you used to do easily, tiring. Walking up and down the stairs may make your legs ache and you may be quite short of breath. Going for even a short walk, is exhausting.

### WHY IS DOING SOME EXERCISE IMPORTANT?

- By being active and starting some exercise you become stronger and fitter. You may notice your tiredness increase and some breathlessness at first but these should improve the stronger you get; this is a normal response to doing more exercise for all of us.
- You will feel better in yourself and can do more of the things that are important to you.
- Regular activity will help to minimise pain and stiffness in joints and will help you regain muscle strength.
- Being active during the day may help you sleep better.
- Over time regular exercise will help you manage chronic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.
- The more time spent being physically active, the greater the health benefits.

# Covid Rehabilitation

## How to get back to normality

HEALTH  
HUB

- It is likely you will only be able to manage small amounts of exercise and activity at the beginning of your recovery.
- Regular physical activity along with eating well can help you recover, build your muscle strength and become independent again.

### HOW DO I START BEING ACTIVE AGAIN?

- Start slowly and build up your level of activity over time.
- Try to do little and often, allow rest between activities and don't overdo it.
- Reduce sitting time. Try standing up every hour and marching on spot.
- Set yourself small goals that you can do in the day. You can start with small tasks such as making a drink or something to eat.
- Aim for a daily walk. Do walk with someone until you are confident to go out on your own.
- Try making a walk part of your daily routine to give your day structure.
- Don't worry if you need to stop and rest, that's a normal part of recovering and getting strong again.
- If you have an exercise bike at home this might be a good alternative to walking, particularly on wet days.

### WALKING - WHAT SHOULD I BE AIMING FOR?

- You should aim to build up to 30 minutes of activity at least five days a week, but this is not going to happen at the beginning of your recovery.
- Take your time and build up as you feel you can and aim to do a little more each day.
- Choose a good time of day (when you are not too tired) to go for a walk.
- You might want to think about times when routes are a little quieter (early morning or evenings).
- Wait an hour after eating a meal before you exercise and take a drink with you.
- Walk with someone until you feel confident to be out on your own.
- If you live alone you might want to walk with a

friend but you must maintain distance between both of you.

- Start with just walking for five minutes without stopping (or less if you feel breathless and tired).
- Gradually build this up, by one or two minutes.
- Once you can do 10 minutes without stopping aim to do two 10-minute walks a day.
- Once you can achieve three 10-minute walks aim for two 15-minute walks.
- Gradually progress to a 30-minute walk.
- Once you can walk for 30 minutes without stopping, you can begin to build up your speed.

### HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M WORKING AT THE RIGHT LEVEL?

- You should be able speak a sentence when you are exercising.
- If you feel uncomfortable at any point, stop and rest for as long as you need.
- It's normal to feel a little breathless, warm and sweaty during exercise.
- Your muscles may ache afterwards but this should not last for more than a couple of days.
- You may feel more tired afterwards, but it's important to keep walking to build up your fitness and eventually feel less tired.
- It may help to record the times that you walked so you can see your progress. You may not feel as strong on some days than others and walk quite as far, but don't get disheartened, look at your progress week- on- week. We all have good days and bad days.

### WHAT IF I HAVE A BAD DAY?

It is normal to have setbacks even without having had COVID so don't give up. There is no reason to feel that you've failed. Learning from your experiences helps you to set goals that are more realistic and more likely to last. This will help you to set activity goals that become part of your daily routines.

**\* Remember the less you do, the less you will want to do and the less you will be able to do. \***

# Covid Rehabilitation

## How to get back to normality



### PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE STARTING EXERCISE

Any exercise could lead to risk of physical injury. You should feel good when participating in activity or exercise. If you experience any extreme pain, shortness of breath or dizziness, stop and seek advice. Following this, activity and exercise advice, is at your own risk. If you feel unwell before, during or after, stop immediately and seek advice.

**BMW Mini**  
**HEALTH HUB**

EXERCISE		PHOTO	EXERCISE		PHOTO
ANKLE ROLLS	10 X 1 BOTH DIRECTIONS		CHEST FLY & HUG	10 X 1 SLOW	
ALTERNATING KNEE LIFTS	10 X 1 SLOW		CHEST STRETCH	30-60 SEC HOLD X 1	
ALTERNATING LEG STEP OVERS	10 X 1 SLOW		ARM ROTATIONS	10 X 1 BOTH DIRECTIONS	
LEG EXTENSIONS	10 X 1 SLOW		SHOULDER SHRUGS ROTATIONS	10 X 1 BOTH DIRECTIONS	
HAMSTRING STRETCH	30-60 SEC HOLD X 1 EACH LEG		SHOULDER STRETCH	30-60 SEC HOLD X 1 EACH ARM	
GLUTE STRETCH	30-60 SEC HOLD X 1 EACH LEG		HEAD TWISTS	10 X 1 BOTH DIRECTIONS	
HIP ROTATIONS	10 X 1 BOTH DIRECTIONS		NECK STRETCH	30 SEC HOLD X 1	
ALTERNATING TORSO ROTATION	10 X 1 BOTH DIRECTIONS		WRIST ROLLS	10 X 1 BOTH DIRECTIONS	

#### CARDIOVASCULAR EXERCISES

- Treat each day as it feels - some days you can do more / others less
- Try to gradually build up the duration of cardiovascular exercise
- Go steady with intensity - should always be able to talk
- Start with Walking / Cycling and build from there

#### STRENGTH EXERCISES

- For weights use household items if needed
- Rest for as long as needed inbetween sets
- Keep the rep speed slow & controlled

EXERCISE	PHOTO
ABDOMINAL CRUNCH	4-15 x 1-3
WALL PUSH UP	4-15 x 1-3
SEATED BICEP CURL	4-15 x 1-3
SEATED FRONT RAISE	4-15 x 1-3
SEATED LATERAL RAISE	4-15 x 1-3
SIT TO STAND	4-15 x 1-3