

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Covid-19 (Coronavirus) – rehabilitation guide

You have been provided with this resource pack for home following your recent hospital admission due to an acute illness.

Some of the information is individualised for you and some is generic information that we have added in case you feel you need further advice or support once you are at home.

If you cannot find the information you need within this pack please contact your local GP for further guidance.

We wish you well in your ongoing recovery.

**A useful electronic resource can be found at:
<https://covidpatientsupport.lthtr.nhs.uk/#/>**

(click on the link if viewing online, or type into your browser if you have a paper copy)

Contents:

- Breathlessness and fatigue management
- Energy conservation
- Breathing exercises
- Physical activity and exercises
- Voice changes
- Nutritional support and eating well
- Swallowing difficulties
- Additional services at home (including social care support and advice number, handy person's adaptation service, meals at home, contact details for the community therapy team)
- Psychological wellbeing – Let's Talk service
- Age UK – To support you with Physical and mental health, care needs, bereavement, housing, finances and social interaction.

Breathlessness and fatigue

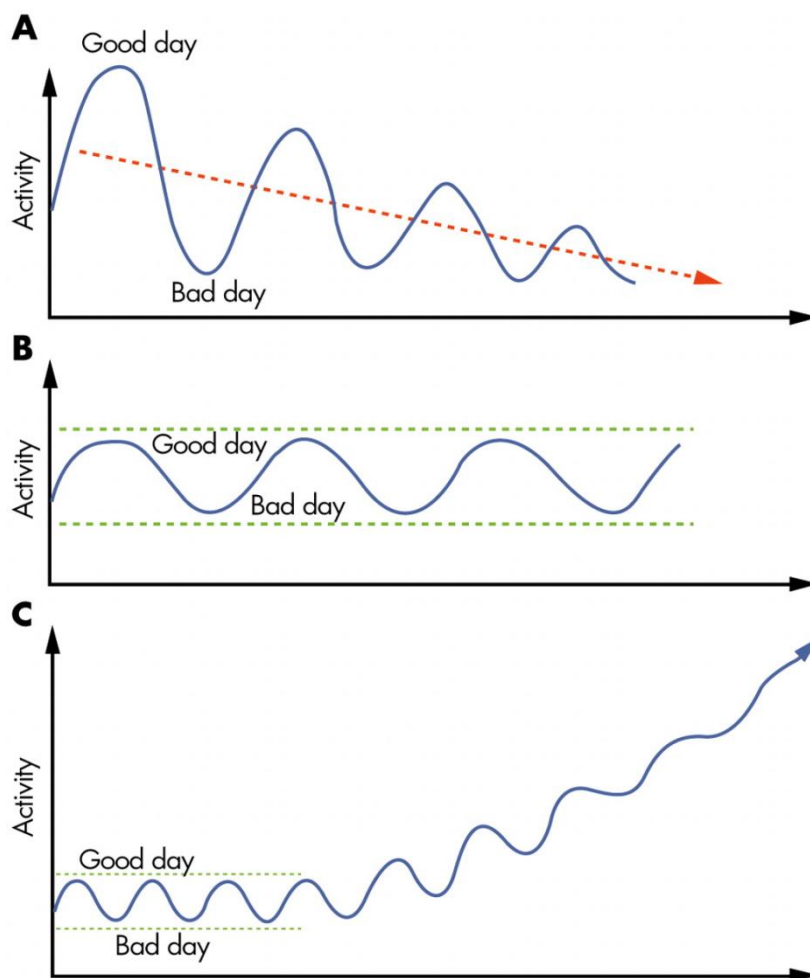
Following a severe illness it is normal to experience some breathlessness and fatigue on exertion. The road to recovery will take time and energy for you and those who maybe around you.

We would advise taking a 'little and often approach' to your activities and do a little more every day.

If you do lots on one day, but then find you are very tired the day after, you may have done too much (graph A below).

Try and balance out your activity everyday (graph B).

Then you will find you can do slowly more everyday leading you back to what is most important to you (graph C).



Energy conservation and pacing activity

Energy conservation and pacing yourself is very important following your hospital stay where you may have been significantly unwell for a long period of time.

It may be daunting to be discharged home after not doing a lot of personal daily activities independently during this time. We suggest that you take your time and complete tasks in a manageable time, prioritising and planning daily activities.

Energy conservation is about adapting a way to carry out day to day activities. Everything we do is an activity and uses some form of energy. It is important to understand how much energy is used in activities carried out and which are more or less demanding.

Pacing yourself and ensure you take a slow and steady pace - don't rush. Listen to your body and rest when you become exhausted. Have sufficient rest after completing a task before moving onto another task.

The journey to recovery would have started at hospital, but when you go home it is about remembering it will take time for you to fully recovery and feel like 'normal' again.

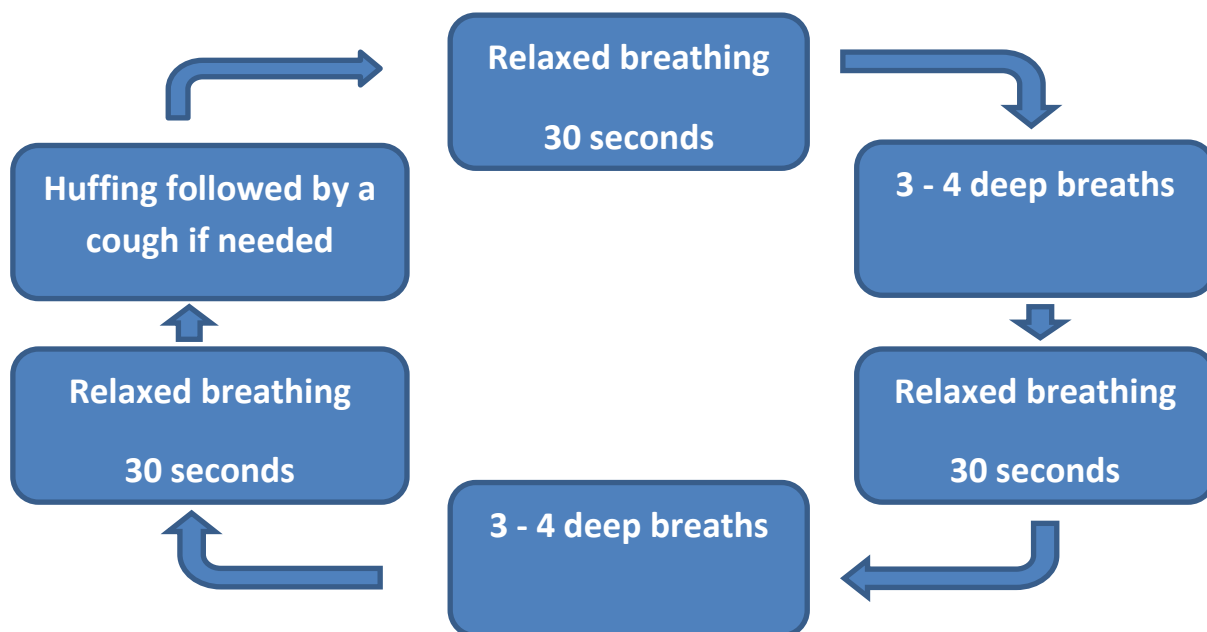
To help yourself before completing any tasks, ensure you gather together necessary items. Try to prevent yourself from bending and reaching. Use modern household utensils and appliances to save energy. For transporting items, think about using trolleys to assist in pushing rather than carrying heavy objects.



Below is a Borg exertion scale, which is a way to test how hard you are exercising. This may be helpful for you to think about what you should complete daily and how to begin building up your tolerance gradually.

How you might describe your exertion	Borg rating of your exertion	Examples (for most adults under 65 years old)
None	6	Reading a book, watching television.
Very, very light	7 to 8	Tying shoes.
Very light	9 to 10	Chores like folding clothes that seem to take little effort.
Fairly light	11 to 12	Walking through the supermarket or other activities that require some effort but not enough to speed up your breathing.
Somewhat hard	13 to 14	Brisk walking or other activities that require moderate effort and speed your heart rate and breathing, but don't make you out of breath.
Hard	15 to 16	Cycling, swimming, or other activities that take vigorous effort and get the heart pounding and make breathing very fast.
Very hard	17 to 18	The highest level of activity you can sustain.
Very, very hard	19 to 20	A finishing kick in a race or other burst of activity that you can't maintain for very long.

Breathing exercises



Complete these exercises for **5 - 10 minutes, 3 times daily**. You can do them more if you wish.

If you are able, getting out of bed and having a regular walk around your room is great for your chest to encourage deep breathing.

These exercises will encourage any sputum (phlegm) to be removed from your lungs. This is important as sputum that sits in your lungs could cause further chest infections.

Please practice important cough etiquette and hygiene at all times to prevent the possible spread of infection. This is as follows:

- Turn your head away from other people during a cough and expectoration of sputum.
- 'Catch your cough' in a tissue, dispose of this tissue in a bin and wash your hands thoroughly each time.
- If your cough is unexpected and you do not have a tissue at hand, try to cough into the crease of your arm.

When completing the exercises or coughing, please ensure that other people in the room are at **least two metres** away from you if possible.

Breathlessness

If you are becoming breathless on exertion; stop, rest, avoid talking and focus on breathing deeply for a little while.

Your physiotherapist on the ward can show you different techniques and positions to rest in to recover.

Physical activity and exercises

Following your illness you have most likely felt that your body and muscles have become weaker. This is a result of your illness and because you were too unwell to move around as normal.

It is important to complete the exercises that you have been provided with regularly. This really is the only way to strengthen them again and get back to doing what you enjoy again.

You have been provided with individualised exercises to help you work on what is most important to you. These would likely have started with bed exercises, then chair based exercises, progressing to standing and balance exercises. The benefits of these exercises include:

- To regain or maintain the movement in your joints.
- To rebuild the strength in your muscles.
- To be able to do your everyday activities again (starting with moving around your home).
- To strengthen your endurance and stamina.
- To reduce stress levels and aid a normal sleeping pattern.

Voice changes

Some patients are finding that they are experiencing changes to their voice after being ill with Covid-19. This can happen for a number of reasons.

Talking can be more difficult if you are breathless. Your voice might sound weak, quiet, rough or hoarse. You may have a sore throat if you have been coughing a lot. Some patients can have damage to their voice box (larynx) as a result of the breathing tube, particularly if this has been in place for more than a couple of days. The tube can cause inflammation on the vocal folds and sometimes nerve damage, which is usually temporary.

Here are some strategies for looking after your voice:

- Sit in an upright position and take a good breath before talking.
- Speak in shorter sentences.
- Reduce background noise when communicating with others.
- Avoid shouting or forcing your voice out.
- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water.
- Reduce caffeine and alcohol intake.
- If your voice feels tired, stop, rest and try later.

Problems with your voice should improve as your symptoms resolve. If you still have problems after a few weeks you should contact your GP and ask to be referred to the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) department.

Nutritional support and eating well

Nutritional problems are very common after an illness. With Covid-19 these can include:

- Weight and muscle loss
- Appetite loss
- Taste changes
- Fatigue.

Good nutrition is an important part of your recovery. During your recovery and rehabilitation we want to avoid unintentional weight loss, even if you are overweight. Your body needs sufficient energy, protein, vitamins and minerals to support your immune system, rebuild muscle and allow you to complete your rehabilitation exercises.

If you are struggling with a poor appetite or have lost a significant amount of weight, we can provide some additional information to support you with this and help prevent any weight loss.

Swallowing difficulties

Some people who have had Covid-19 have difficulties eating and drinking. If we stop using our muscles, they may become weak. Swallowing involves many different muscles and it can be difficult if we have not had anything to eat or drink for a period of time. Eating and drinking might take more effort than usual; you may become tired more easily or feel breathless at times. There are things you can do to help manage this at home.

Top tips for eating and drinking comfortably:

- Always sit up fully for any food or drink.
- Eat or drink at a slower pace.
- Stop and rest if you are feeling breathless or tired.
- Try and eat smaller amounts often throughout the day, rather than three normal meals.
- Take small sips or bites.
- If you are getting tired or out of breath when chewing, try eating softer foods which need to be chewed less.

If you saw a speech and language therapist during your admission, follow the advice they gave you.

If you are following this advice but still having swallowing problems, or you have any of the following symptoms, please contact your GP:

- ✚ **Coughing or choking when eating or drinking.**
- ✚ **A wet or gurgly voice.**
- ✚ **Feeling a sticking sensation in the throat when eating or drinking.**
- ✚ **New frequent chest infections.**

Additional support services

Below and overleaf are details for services that are provided to patients at home. Following discussions with your therapy team on the ward, some referrals may have been made to you. However, should anything new come to light at home, you may ring and refer yourself to the following services. If you have any other concerns, please speak to your GP.

Social care support and advice



- Do you need help with washing and dressing or making meals?
- Do you keep falling over and want advice on reducing your risk of falling?
- Would you like support with falls alarms or calling for help when you need it?

Call the following number and tell them where you need support and an individualised assessment will be carried out.

Telephone: 0300 500 8080

Handy person's adaptations service

Need help or support with keeping safe and secure in your home?

For small practical jobs and minor adaptations, help and advice is available for people who are over 60 or have a disability.

Telephone: 0300 500 8080

Meals at home

County Enterprise Foods provide an award-winning service, delivering delicious, great value, hot and frozen meals to homes across Nottinghamshire.

Telephone: 01623 490015

Community Urgent Response and Rehabilitation Team

If you have been referred to the Community Urgent Response and Rehabilitation Team, you should expect to be contacted within the next couple of days for them to review you and assess your rehabilitation needs at home.

If you have any problems please contact them about this referral on telephone 01623 781891.

Psychological support

Should you begin to feel concerned about your mental wellbeing following discharge, please consider speaking to your GP. We will give you information about your local talking therapy service which you can self-refer to if required.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references (if relevant) for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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