



Tallaght
University
Hospital

Ospidéal
Ollscoile
Thamhlachta

An Academic Partner of Trinity College Dublin



PATIENT
INFORMATION
BOOKLET

Health and Rehabilitation

After COVID-19

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Introduction

This manual is created by Health and Social Care Professionals at Tallaght University Hospital, for you and your family after your discharge following treatment of COVID-19 infection.

During your hospital stay, you may have required interventions ranging from oxygen therapy on a general ward or non-invasive ventilation to invasive mechanical ventilation where you may have woken up after a prolonged period of deep sedation in hospital. Staff at Tallaght University Hospital understand that this can feel very unsettling in the days and weeks following critical care.

As COVID-19 is a new virus, we are still learning about it and its effect on the body. Many people recover from COVID-19 at home or after a short stay in hospital. Whereas for some, recovering from COVID-19 more closely resembles recovering from a critical illness.



Potential consequences of COVID-19 can include fatigue, persistent changes in heart and lung function, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress, as well as changes to cognitive attention or memory function in everyday life.

The duration of recovery can also vary. Recovery from respiratory illness can happen quickly, but it can take up to eighteen months or longer to recover from critical illness, and long-term adaptations may sometimes become necessary.

It is important not to pressure yourself to recover to a rigid timeline. It is also important not to compare your recovery to any body else. Please know that highs and lows of energy and motivation are normal and to-be-expected aspects of recovery. These are a shared experience on the road to recovery from the COVID-19 virus.

After leaving hospital, particularly if you were in intensive care, you may be feeling physically weak or may be experiencing complicated emotions associated with your experience of being ill. While these emotions have the potential to leave you feeling distressed or even temporarily feeling unlike yourself, it is important to know that these are not uncommon responses after leaving hospital and receiving medical intervention for COVID-19 infection.

Patients' reports of their experiences in critical care suggest that receiving information about this can help with understanding accurately just what they have been through and with combating feelings of stress or isolation, which are not unusual early on in the recovery process.

You are reading this because you have survived COVID-19 and this manual is created with the intention to support you in a practical way, with evidence-based guidance, to achieve your optimal recovery from COVID-19 infection.



Discharge and continued rehabilitation

The decision to be discharged home or to another rehabilitation facility will be made by your consultant and the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) members caring for you. These MDT members may include some but perhaps not all of the following: nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, audiologists, dieticians, medical social workers, speech and language therapists and psychologists.

Members of these disciplines are available post-discharge to support you in your recovery. Please do not hesitate to avail of this support. For example, medical social workers can offer practical, social and emotional support to individuals and their families during and after COVID-19 illness. Medical social workers will complete a psychosocial assessment and assist with discharge planning. The support that you will require when discharged will be assessed on an individual basis and will vary depending on many factors which include illness, length of stay in hospital and personal circumstances (such as level of independence on discharge). In some cases, access to community supports will be required in order to assist with your recovery at home. Our Medical Social Work team can help with completing these referrals.





We are aware too, that certain factors unique to COVID-19 may have created conditions for experiencing distress in hospital.

If you are experiencing any unusual symptoms or ongoing distress, which may have begun in hospital or after returning home, further support is available. Psychologists can offer therapeutic support to individuals and their families. If you have questions or concerns about the emotional impact of your experience, our psychologists can help you to make sense of this or help you to access community supports to assist in this aspect of recovery.

If you have concerns about ongoing medical symptoms or have outstanding questions about medical prescriptions or medications given to you at the time of discharge, your medical team can address any unanswered questions. Finally, if you have questions about any area of recovery outlined in this manual, such as respiratory or vocal symptoms, hearing, strength and mobility or nutrition, a full list of key contacts for each Health and Social Care Profession at Tallaght University Hospital is included at the end of this manual.



COVID-19: Common experiences

During your hospital stay, you may have felt isolated from loved ones due to visiting restrictions, or may have been exposed to busy ward conditions, noise pollution, and harsh ward lighting which can impact your body's circadian rhythm and disrupt sleep. You may have seen fellow patients on ventilators or unconscious. It is possible that you may even have witnessed death while in hospital. Due to staff wearing masks and personal protective equipment (PPE), you may have experienced physical barriers to seeing and communicating with staff which can exacerbate the distress that is potentially caused by difficult experiences of critical care.

Your memory may be poor. You might have found it hard to focus on what a nurse or doctor is saying to you. You may have been unable to ask a question when hearing information about yourself.

When there are gaps in our knowledge sometimes our brain makes up information to "fill in the gaps", you can find yourself unsure as to whether something happened or not. To fill in the gaps it can be helpful to read back over your ICU diary, or if you are still in ICU speak to a Nurse. It may help you and your family to understand what you have been through and sort out the bad dreams from reality. Strange dreams and flashbacks about experiences are not at all uncommon. Some of the medications you were on can also cause strange dreams. Please understand that however distressing it feels, it is entirely normal to have an intense emotional response to this particular set of circumstances. Prolonged ventilation or prolonged use of sedatives including benzodiazepines, and other psychoactive drugs commonly used in critical care, can also make it more likely to experience these symptoms following discharge from hospital.



After being ill with COVID-19 infection, you may feel like crying for no reason. Your mood may be low. You may feel angry and irritable and wonder why this happened to you. You may feel fearful for the future. Sometimes people avoid talking to others as a way to manage difficult thoughts and emotions however; talking can calm the mind and help you to order thoughts. Maintaining the strategies that you know help you and spending time deliberately doing the things that make you feel good, is important.

If you notice that your normal coping strategies are no longer working well, or you are concerned about symptoms, support may be needed. Many symptoms resolve with time, however if they do not resolve naturally please consider getting help from a mental health or other professional through your GP. These are trained professionals who will have an understanding of the set of circumstances you have been through. They can offer further helpful information about this. They will help you to recover your physical and psychological wellbeing following a major event and personal stressor.



Relationships and COVID-19

Illness and hospitalisation can put pressure on family relationships which may be changed or even strained for a period of time.

Family members often feel anxious and helpless having been cut-off from their loved ones while they were ill. This will likely have had a different affect on each member of the family who in turn will respond in their own unique way to cope with the experience. The experience of hospitalisation can sometimes lead to overwhelming emotions or to overprotectiveness on the part of family members as they will have experienced a high level of worry and threat themselves during the time that you were in hospital.

There may be changes in relationships, even role reversals in close relationships which may take you by surprise. Sometimes family members find it difficult initially to understand and realise that part of your recovery is to do more for yourself. Their strongest urge may be to look after you and this may require negotiation. If there has been an uncomfortable change within a close relationship, it is important not to “sit on” feelings about this.

Talking openly about what has changed in your close relationships can be a very helpful step to recovery for many couples and families after COVID-19 and for building resilience as a family after a challenging time.

The following contacts can provide additional support to help you effectively manage illness, and respond to changes in your life or that of your loved ones.

The **Living Well Dublin** course is a six-week programme, run once a week for two and a half hours. Over the six weeks you will learn new skills to manage your health condition on a day-to-day basis. You will also meet other people living with long term conditions in an open, relaxed and non-judgmental environment.

Please visit:

<https://www.livingwelldublin.ie/>
<https://www.livingwelldublin.ie/contact>

The Irish Hospice Foundation is keeping the Irish public informed and supported in matters relating to end-of-life and bereavement care in these exceptional times and have developed a ‘Care & Inform’ Hub to respond to the COVID-19 emergency with information in line with current HSE and Government guidance. Please visit <https://hospicefoundation.ie/covid19careandinform> or telephone: 01 679 3188

What to be aware of after discharge

Many people who have been ill with COVID-19 infection or cared for in critical care experience emotional and psychological effects of this for a period of time after illness. Symptoms can sometimes persist or occur even after you have physically recovered. The following symptoms are *not uncommon*, however, they *are* symptoms which tend to resolve more easily when they are directly addressed at home or with the support of healthcare professionals:

- Anxiety, or low mood
- Feeling fearful of getting further illness and noticing hyper-vigilance to physical sensations and bodily symptoms
- Feeling on alert, and jumpy, or experiencing nightmares, flashbacks or insomnia
- Impaired memory functioning or difficulty paying attention
- Feeling guilty or worried about contaminating others
- Delirium – experiencing hallucinations, unusual ideas or images, finding it difficult to distinguish between real and unreal phenomena.
- Feeling confused about what happened while in hospital, or experiencing gaps in your memory (which can be due to sedation) or intrusive memories of difficult aspects of your hospital care
- Having felt a high level of distress or lack of control while in hospital, which can sometimes be associated with the inability to communicate due to being intubated, and not understanding why

These symptoms may be connected to or influenced by physical symptoms you may be experiencing, including:

- Fatigue
- Loss of Appetite
- Breathlessness, swallowing difficulties or phlegm
- Muscle weakness, reduced mobility / physical fitness
- Alterations to or loss of your sense of smell or taste
- Gastrointestinal symptoms

Further help and information is available at:

ICU Steps Dublin provides support to patients and relatives affected by critical illness and promotes a positive outlook in recovery. Join their friendly drop-in meetings by Zoom.

To gain access: email information@icusteps.ie or see our website <http://icusteps.ie> for more details



Intensive Care Society, Phone: 01-2650600 or email icsi@coa.ie.
Website www.intensivecare.ie



Returning Home: key strategies

The period after returning home is often a time where people find they are only now beginning to have space to think about and what has happened.

Be kind to yourself. After the experience of COVID-19 infection you may need time to re-connect with yourself and with others.

Key Strategies: Research identifies certain key strategies or steps that can be beneficial in the immediate days and weeks following discharge, particularly if you have had a long hospital stay:

Getting back in Action

You will have had reduced mobility while in hospital so it will help to prime your muscles so that they become strong again. Simply getting out of bed in the morning confers a multitude of benefits for your body.

Planning My Routine

Maintaining structure can positively impact psychological wellbeing. Routines also help us to foster a sense of control and defuse overwhelming feelings which may be present after leaving hospital. Establishing a daily routine and consistent sleep/wake cycle soon after returning home is a strong predictor of recovery. Research shows that being critically ill in intensive care can strongly contribute to poor sleep, that is, disrupted or fragmented sleep, loss of circadian rhythm and insufficient time spent in restorative sleep stages. Sufficient amount and quality of sleep can positively influence respiratory, cardiovascular, immunologic, metabolic, and hormonal health and energy levels, whereas poor sleep can negatively affect these areas of physical recovery as well as exacerbating delirium, mental fog and symptoms of stress and post-traumatic stress. Therefore, addressing the pattern and quality of your sleep to support your recovery of physical and psychological health following illness and intensive care is a particularly worthwhile evidence-based strategy for returning home.

As a start, these three simple strategies can help to re-establish your circadian rhythm.

- Go to bed early (in a dark room, without phones, television or laptops)
- Try to resist the urge to sleep or nap during the day as this can disrupt your day/night sleep cycle
- Aim to get up and move your body reasonably early in the morning

Planning My Information Diet

Intentionally limiting your exposure to anxiety- provoking news about COVID-19 will help to reduce anxiety you may be experiencing. Simply make a plan to check one trusted news source, no more than once per day.

Coping with Disorientation and Strong Emotions

If you are experiencing disorientation or confusion at home, please speak to your GP or medical team. Deliberately focusing on what is familiar and safe can help re-orient and rehabilitate the brain and restore a sense of safety to the nervous system. The following strategies may also help at home:

- Place a clock and calendar in your room and check it daily. This helps orient the brain to your new routine
- Rest, and limit your activity to easy tasks that you enjoy, for now
- Limit contact, initially to family and friends, in whose company you feel safe and well. It may be helpful to ask for the support of family members to help establish these changes, in your home and daily routine.



Post viral fatigue

What is it and what can be done about it?

One of the most common symptoms you may face in the aftermath of having contracted COVID-19 is that of fatigue. For some, this may be a short-term symptom, and for others it may be longer-term, in what is known as Post Viral Fatigue Syndrome (PVFS).

What is PVFS? Most of what we know about post-viral fatigue is based off our knowledge of previous epidemics such as SARS-CoV and the Spanish Flu. It is thought that fatigue may be a result of an increased 'inflammatory process' that occurs when you contract a virus. Your body produces chemicals called cytokines which are the front-line soldiers in destroying the viral infection. Sometimes this may lead to heightened and overactive immune responses known as a 'cytokine surge' or 'cytokine storm' which doesn't return to normal straight away. In particular, this strain of COVID-19 has been found to result in a delayed expression of a crucial part of your defence mechanism (Type 1 Interferon Signalling) which is thought to play a critical role in the 'cytokine storm'.

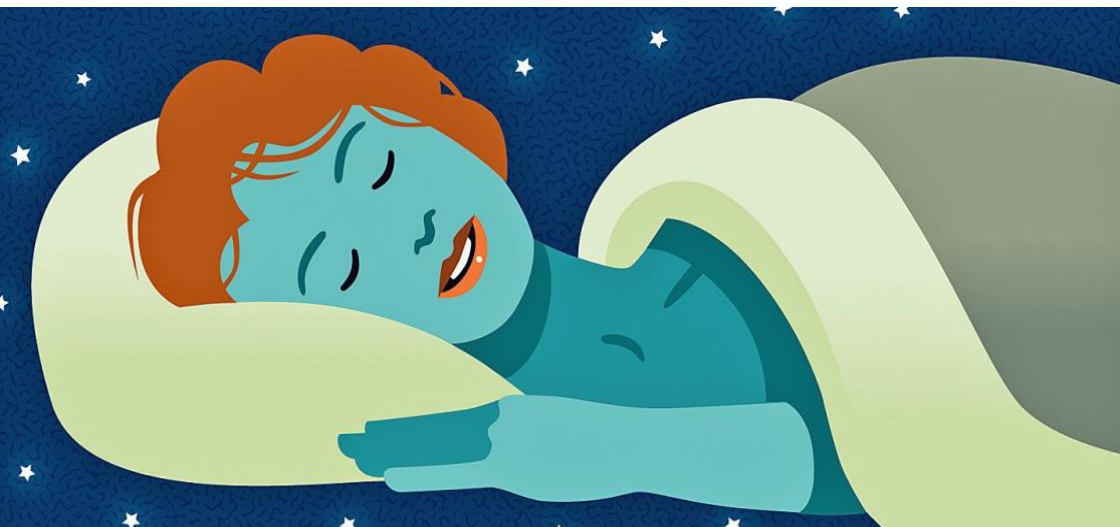
What symptoms should I look out for? In PVFS you may experience a variety of symptoms including having no energy, fatigue, aches and worsened pains, poorer general health as well as an inability or reduced ability to respond to your normal Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). You may also experience differences with regard to your 'sleep architecture', that is experiencing reduced sleep quantity and quality.

What is ME/CFS? If you find that your symptoms are persisting in the longer-term, it is worth considering if you have PVFS. It is important to address this with a healthcare practitioner early on as there is an increased risk it may develop into Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME), commonly referred to as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). In this case, you may experience greater tiredness (malaise) on normal activities such as getting dressed or showering. This is known as Post Exertional Malaise (PEM). The fatigue may not present for up to 24-48 hours after such exertion. You may also feel your memory or attention span is affected.

What day-to-day strategies may help with fatigue management?

1. Sleep – An increased focus on getting more sleep (hypersomnia) is important as your body recovers from a viral infection. Allow yourself to sleep as needed in the initial stages of recovery
2. Rest and relax – facilitating a good night sleep, eating a healthy diet, avoiding stressful situations and limiting work-related activities
3. Stress management – approaches such as meditation and/or yoga may help with relaxing your mind and promoting a good quality sleep. Similarly, avoiding stressful environments and devices where you have access to work is important to give your mind a sufficient break. If you feel apathetic, down, or anxious in the longer-term you should consult with a healthcare professional
4. Pacing – it is important to recognise that you may feel better some days than others. It is important not to overexert yourself on these days as you may experience a dip in energy (a 'backlash') afterwards
5. Energy envelope – once you begin to feel that you have found the balance between rest and activity, you can begin to gradually increase your activity levels over a longer period of time – this means avoiding anything that is too vigorous or prolonged

If you are experiencing fatigue or symptoms of PVFS, you may find the following 'quick guide' and further information about recovering energy following illness helpful.



What causes fatigue?

You are most likely to feel fatigue soon after your illness when your body is healing, however, fatigue can continue on for some time. Anyone who has had a critical illness can experience it, regardless of age, gender, or fitness levels.

Fatigue can be due to the body taking time to heal. Medication; pain; poor sleep, stress or doing too much can all contribute to fatigue.

Fatigue may also be due to the body learning new ways of adapting to disability. However, many people who do not have physical difficulties after illness also feel fatigue.

Fatigue after Illness

It is normal for everyone to feel tired. Normal fatigue is general tiredness that is a result of over exertion and can be helped by rest.

Fatigue after an illness like COVID-19 is different. Your normal energy levels do not return and you feel that you are no longer able to carry out a normal range of daily activities.

Fatigue when recovering from illness is like trying to operate a radio with a battery that no longer works properly. The radio may work for short periods of time but then starts to fail quite quickly. After a rest it will charge or work again – but only for a short time.

- If you are fatigued you may notice that you:
- Are constantly ‘worn out’ for no clear reason;
- Are mentally tired and lacking in motivation;
- Need to rest more than usual
- Have difficulty carrying out physical activity or responsibilities
- Feel no better after sleep or rest

Coping with Fatigue?

How you think about fatigue will affect how to manage and cope with your fatigue. Therefore, changing your attitude towards your fatigue can change how your fatigue feels!

Some of the following may lead to increased fatigue:

- Worry
- Stress
- Overdoing things or not doing enough
- Thinking negatively (e.g. “I can’t cope”)
- Poor sleep
- Arguments with family or friends

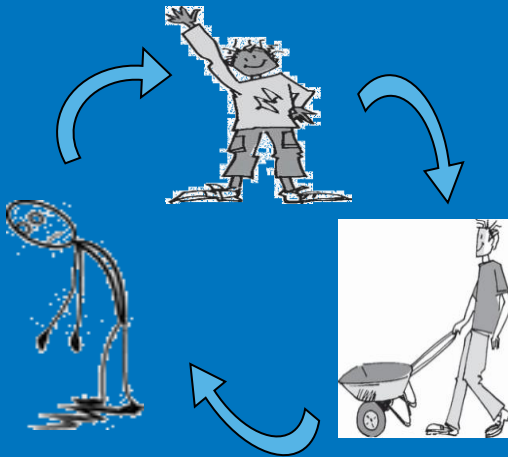


Psychological effects of fatigue

How you think about fatigue will affect how to manage and cope with your fatigue.

Physical fatigue can leave you feeling helpless and as if you are out of control. It can also lead to frustration and you may then decide to 'beat' it, especially when you are having a 'good day' but then end up tired and feeling more frustrated.

You may get stuck in a cycle that looks a bit like this:



Over time this can lead to mental fatigue and distress which can reduce your ability and willingness to engage in activity.

It can feel as if you are not getting better. This is called the Over-Activity–Under-Activity cycle.

Responding to Fatigue

It can be easy to carry on when you feel fatigued, however, it is important to learn to manage it. Many people do the following:

On a good day, when the fatigue is mild, people see it as a chance to get all the things they need done, especially things they have not done.

They then increase their level of activity – e.g., tidying the house, cleaning the car, doing the garden etc.

Then after this increased activity, fatigue gradually (or quickly) increases in intensity.

A point is then reached when the fatigue becomes so severe that further activity becomes impossible.

Activity then stops – you may take to the bed or you may be forced to sit and rest, sometimes for period of hours or days or even weeks.

Fatigue levels slowly respond to this decrease in physical activity and gradually fall, and you have more energy.

When the fatigue has reached a relatively 'mild' level, and energy returns the cycle starts again.

It's a bit like taking one step forward and two steps back!

No gains are ever made in terms of increased physical stamina or strength, and the fatigue does not get better. Social isolation, stress and upset can then be felt.

How to Manage Fatigue: Pacing

No matter what the cause of your fatigue it is how you manage it that will affect your recovery.

The goal is to take back **control** of your activity levels. Trying to go back too soon to doing all you did before you had COVID-19 as a way of proving you are getting better can set you back!!

The key to pacing is not to push yourself too much on good days, and still do a little on not so good days. This way over time, the amount you can do will increase. This requires you to be kind to yourself, to take regular breaks and take small steps.

Reduce your expectations of what you can do for a while, as you gradually build up. Give yourself permission to slowly build up.

Try to do some level of exercise. But start gently, for example a short walk and slowly build up. On the days when the fatigue is mild and you feel you could walk more - **DON'T**- it is important you gradually build up.

Tell others that you cannot do everything at once! Accepting this may not be easy but it is important for you to slowly re-build your activity levels.

Talk to your doctor and ask if anything medical could be contributing to fatigue.



Speech & Language Therapy

Help with swallow, voice & communication

A Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) diagnoses and treats people of all ages with swallowing and communication difficulties. You may meet with a SLT during your COVID-19 journey.

A swallowing difficulty means that a person may experience:

- Pain on swallowing
- Difficulty chewing and clearing food from the mouth
- Coughing or choking when eating or drinking
- Shortness of breath when eating or drinking
- A feeling of food getting stuck in the throat and/or chest
- Eye tearing and reddening of the face
- A feeling of food coming back up or 'regurgitation'
- History of repeated chest infections
- Difficulty managing saliva
- Weight loss
- Increased length of meal times
- Food refusal

Safe Swallowing Strategies

There are some strategies you can use to maximise the safety of your swallow:

- Be fully awake and alert.
- Always sit upright when eating and drinking.
- Allow plenty of time when eating and drinking. Do not rush.
- If you have false teeth (dentures) ensure you are wearing them.
- Take single sips of fluids and small mouthfuls of food.
- Allow plenty of time to swallow between mouthfuls.
- Take regular breaks at mealtimes, especially if you feel short of breath or are using oxygen.



You may experience swallowing difficulties during and after the COVID-19 virus

Post extubation swallowing difficulties

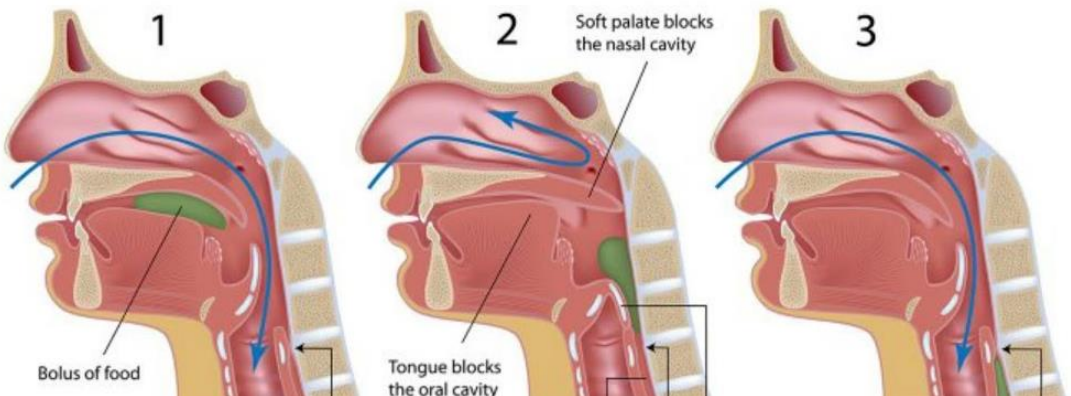
If you were in the Intensive Care Unit with the COVID-19 virus, a tube may have been placed into your mouth and windpipe to help with your breathing (intubation). You may experience some difficulty with swallowing when this tube is removed (extubation) as intubation may result in weakening of the swallowing muscles and changes in sensation in the throat.

Coughing on fluids and foods due to changes in breathing

We automatically co-ordinate our breathing with swallowing to ensure safe swallowing and that what we are drinking and eating does not 'go down the wrong way'. Shortness of breath with the COVID-19 virus or need for oxygen therapy may make this co-ordination more difficult and increase the risk of coughing at mealtimes.

Impact of fatigue and weakness on safe swallowing

Deconditioning, a decline in muscle strength and physical function (such as walking, self-care) can occur with illness. Prolonged bed rest associated with the COVID-19 virus may affect all systems of the body, including swallowing muscles. Furthermore, many individuals experience fatigue during and after the COVID-19 virus. These factors may result in swallowing difficulties due to reduced tongue strength and chewing ability. You might tire more easily when eating which may be a further challenge for swallowing safely.



Mouth Care

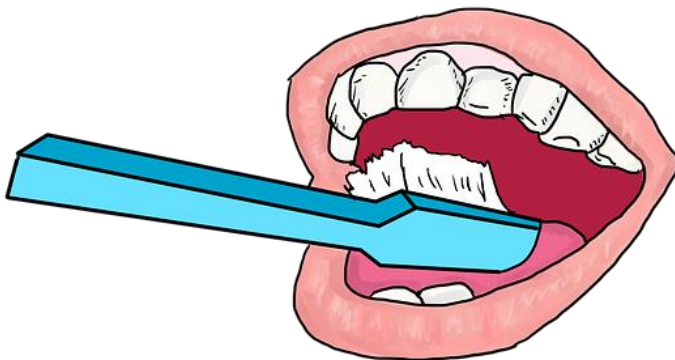
Good mouth care is very important to maintain oral cleanliness and reduce the risk of additional infections. Your mouth can become very dry and sore if mouth care is not maintained.

Tips for Good Mouth Care:

- You may experience dry mouth if you are using oxygen. Taking some sips of water (unless you are told not to take drinks), or speak to your Nurse about using toothpaste/gel for dry mouth (such as BioXtra).
- Brush your teeth regularly with a small soft headed toothbrush and a small amount of toothpaste.
- If you wear false teeth (dentures), remove these after meals and clean off debris with a toothbrush. Remove dentures at night and store in a named denture pot to keep them safe.

If you are still a bit short of breath and/or get tired very quickly when eating:

- Take a break during your meal if you become short of breath.
- Take your time. Eat slowly. Take small mouthfuls.
- When drinking, sip slowly, avoid continuous swallows.
- Seat yourself in an upright supported chair when you are eating and drinking and remain upright for 30 minutes after.



Communication, Voice & COVID-19

Voice Difficulties during and after COVID-19

Long term intubation in the Intensive Care Unit may result in damage to the vocal cords, which may change the sound of your voice. You may also experience prolonged and excessive coughing with the COVID-19 virus which may result in swelling and inflammation of your vocal cords.

These changes may result in some temporary changes to the sound of your voice. Your voice may sound rougher and deeper. These sound changes are similar to what you may experience with a typical cold or flu. However, the COVID-19 virus may result in more intense and longer lasting sound changes. It is suggested that these changes may take 6 – 8 weeks to gradually resolve. You may need to meet with a Speech and Language Therapist to explore these voice changes further.



If your voice has not returned to normal after 6-8 weeks after the start of symptoms of the COVID-19 virus, you should contact your GP as you may require onward referral to the Ear, Nose and Throat doctor for further assessment.



Vocal Hygiene

There are some strategies you can try if you do experience changes to the sound of your voice, including:

- Ensure you are well hydrated with drinks that do not contain caffeine or alcohol
- Avoid smoking or vaping
- Try gentle steaming with hot water
- Make sure there is enough humidity in your environment
- Aim for conversations in a quiet environment – attempting to talk over loud background noise can strain the vocal folds
- Try to avoid excessive throat clearing as much as possible. If this is difficult, try to make throat clearing as gentle as possible
- Avoid medicated lozenges and gargles
- Be mindful of your voice during telephone and video calls – avoid long conversations and consider using text-based options instead
- Try not to whisper – this puts the voice box under additional strain
- If your voice feels tired or strained, take a rest. This gives time for the voice to recover
- Avoid activities like singing and shouting until you feel your voice is returning to normal



Tips for **Vocal Hygiene**



Rehabilitation for Swallowing, Communication & Voice

Each person is expected to have different recovery experiences with the COVID-19 virus. Some individuals with COVID-19 require Speech and Language Therapy for swallowing and/or communication difficulties during their COVID-19 journey and/or after the symptoms of COVID-19 have resolved.

Your Speech and Language Therapist may recommend treatment for your swallowing difficulty, which may include:

- Use of different strategies and learning new ways to swallow safely
- Changing the consistency of your drinks and foods to make them safer to swallow
- Specific swallowing exercises to improve your swallowing

Treatment for communication changes may include:

- Use of communication strategies
- Direct therapy targeting voice difficulties
- Language stimulation work such as crosswords and puzzles, reading activities, supporting communication with family via video calls, radio and television



What makes communication easier?

Communicating with others may prove more challenging at the moment because many people we meet during our day wear face masks and personal protective equipment (PPE).

If you find communicating with others difficult, there are some strategies you can try to make communication easier:

- If you have glasses and hearing aids ensure you wear them
- Limit distractions where possible – turn down the TV/radio in the background, encourage the curtain is pulled around to reduce noise
- Pause and leave plenty of time for conversation
- If you are unsure of what you have heard ask for this information to be repeated. If it is difficult to hear or understand, ask the speaker to write the information down
- Think about non-verbal communication which may help convey your message including gesture, pointing and writing down key words
- A SLT can work with you to help communication with pictures and charts if you are having difficulty getting your message across

After Discharge

- If you were under the care of a SLT during your hospital stay, you will be provided with all of the information that is appropriate to your swallowing and communication needs before you leave. It is important that you continue to follow this advice.
- If you need more input after you leave hospital you will be referred for additional Speech and Language Therapy on discharge.
- You may also discuss referral to Community Speech and Language Therapy with your G.P if you experience swallowing or communication difficulties at home when you leave hospital.



Help with hearing

Hearing aid repairs and servicing

If your hearing aids were supplied by the H.S.E., then this service is available to you:

If your Hearing aid is not working well, it may need to be cleaned or serviced. Unfortunately, the Community Audiology Service is not open for appointments at present, however there are two alternatives.

If you were given your Hearing aid from the HSE you can post it into their Repair Service in Grange Gorman in Dublin.

Postal Address: HSE Community Audiology Service, Grange Gorman Primary Care Centre, Upper Grange Gorman Road, Grange Gorman, Dublin 7, D07 H984

Tel : 01 867 6263 / 01 867 6264

Please post your Hearing aid in a strong and secure padded envelope and make sure that the Hearing aid is well protected inside.

Please remember to include your name and a Return address and a note to say what you think may be wrong with your Hearing aid.

Drop-Off Service: The Community Audiology Service is also operating a Drop-Off service for broken Hearing Aids in The Russell Centre in Tallaght Cross West, Tallaght. Tel: (01) 79 57606 / (01) 79 57616.

What to do: There is a box situated outside of the Audiology Reception on Level One next to the lifts where you can leave your Hearing aid for servicing or repair.

Leave the Hearing aid in the box and your Hearing Aid will be repaired and posted out to you. You will get it back within 3-5 working days. Again, please remember to wrap your Hearing aid securely and put your Name and Address inside the package so that the Hearing Aid Service know who to return it to.



If you bought your Hearing Aids yourself you will need to return them to your Hearing Aid supplier. Contact them first to check their current servicing arrangements.

Successful Communication Strategies for people with hearing loss

It can be very tiring for people with a hearing loss to be able to follow conversation even when they are well so when recovering from COVID-19 you may feel that it requires a greater effort to be able to hear properly.

- Tell your friends and family that they need to get your attention first so that you do not miss the beginning of the conversation.
- Make sure that the speaker is facing you and is in a good light so that you can see their face which will help you to lip read and to see their expression. Many people think that they are not able to lip read but unconsciously as your hearing loss progresses everyone does.
- Reduce the level of background noise, turn the radio/T.V. volume down. Do not try to talk to people from a different room.



- Ask people to speak clearly, slowly and naturally, without shouting or exaggerating mouth movements. This gives you more time to process less information. Shouting distorts the sound of speech and may make lip reading more difficult. Be ready to say if you have not fully understood what is being said.
- Ask people not to cover their mouths with their hands. Chewing gum, smoking and eating all makes it more difficult for you to understand what is being said.
- If you hear better in one ear than the other, try to make a point of remembering which ear is better so that you will know where to position yourself.
- Never be afraid to tell strangers that you have a hearing loss. It makes conversation easier and less awkward and instead of “pretending” that you can hear you will be able to relax and concentrate on what is being said and lip read without feeling self –conscious.
- If you don’t understand what someone has said to you ask them to say it again but in a different way, using different words.

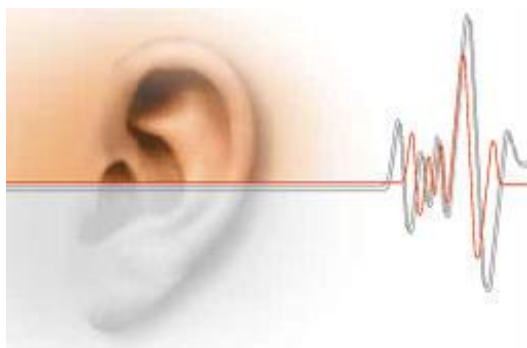
Successful communication:

Advice for looking after your hearing aids

Always make sure that your Hearing aids are working properly. Keep them clean and free from wax.

Clean them every night at bedtime to get into a regular routine. Make sure that you have a good supply of batteries or that your recharging unit is working.

You must wear your Hearing Aids ALL DAY, EVERY DAY to get the optimum benefit from them. The hearing pathway in your brain will NEVER get used to sound if you only stimulate it intermittently.



This is one of the main reasons why people have trouble hearing with their Hearing Aids because wearing them only when the family visit is not sufficient for you to acclimatise to them.

- Try to keep calm. If you become anxious or flustered, it will be harder for you to be able to follow what is being said.
- Tell people to let you know if the topic of conversation has changed and to tell you what they are talking about now. In a group setting, ask them to repeat questions or key facts before continuing with the discussion.
- If someone is giving you specific information – such as time, place or phone numbers – get them to repeat the specifics back to you. Many numbers and words sound alike.
- Whenever possible, ask for information in writing, such as directions, schedules, work assignments, etc.
- Take turns speaking and avoid interrupting other speakers to reduce confusion.

Help with nutrition and diet

Good nutrition is essential for your recovery and rehabilitation. Whilst unwell, you may have experienced symptoms such as fatigue, loss of appetite, breathlessness, swallowing difficulties, altered sense of taste and smell, stomach upset and even diarrhoea and vomiting. As a result, you may have lost weight and your muscles may have reduced in size and strength. Eating adequate amounts of nutritious food, together with physical activity, will help you to regain your strength. Eating foods rich in protein and energy will help to repair the muscles and tissues that have been affected by the infection. They also provide the extra calories you need to help maintain your weight while your appetite is poor.

Eat often throughout the day

Have something to eat every 1 – 2 hours.

Do not skip meals

Try a few mouthfuls even if you are not hungry.

Eat food containing protein twice a day: eggs, meat, beans, chicken or other poultry, fish, cheese or nuts.

Drink liquids that give you energy through the day

Opt for milk, milky drinks and smoothies, instead of filling up on drinks that have little nutritional value such e.g. water, tea/coffee, diet minerals, Bovril.

Eat full fat varieties of foods such as cheese and yogurt

- ❑ Avoid low fat, low calorie or diet foods.
- ❑ Cold foods that don't have strong smell may be easier to tolerate when unwell. Try foods such as yogurt, breakfast cereal, sandwiches, cheese and crackers, ice cream and smoothies.
- ❑ Changes to taste, as well as smell, can make eating and drinking less enjoyable. Try adding lemon juice, herbs, spices, pepper, chutney and vinegar to your foods.
- ❑ **Fruit and vegetables** are good but can be filling and low in calories.
- ❑ When your appetite is poor 2-3 portions per day is adequate.



Tips for shopping:

Following an infection, your energy levels may be low and you may tire easily. Preparing meals may be difficult.

To ensure you are getting adequate nutrition try:

Convenience foods

Keep your freezer, refrigerator and cupboards stocked with foods that are ready-to-eat or easily prepared

Use **pre-washed, pre-cut** fruits and vegetables.

- Ask** friends and family to help with meal preparation and shopping
- Make shopping lists and include a variety of foods**
- Prepare food in bulk, divide into containers and freeze
- Enquire with local restaurants or grocery stores about **home delivery**
- Make safe food choices. Don't eat foods that are out of date or left out of the fridge for long periods. For more safe food information see www.safefood.eu

Meal preparation

Here is a list of store cupboard essentials which may help with easy meals:

- Wholegrain Cereals
- Porridge Oats
- Sliced Pan / Pitta pockets (can be frozen)
- Crackers, biscuits
- Olive or rapeseed oil
- Cheese
- Butter
- Cream
- Skimmed milk powder
- Eggs
- Tinned fish – mackerel, sardines, salmon, tuna
- Freeze some fresh cuts of meat/fish/chicken
- Pulses – baked beans, lentils, chickpeas, kidney beans
- Pasta, spaghetti, cous cous, rice
- Tinned tomatoes
- Stock cubes
- Tinned Fruit
- Seeds – e.g. linseed, flaxseed, sesame, sunflower
- Nuts – e.g. almonds, walnuts, cashews, peanuts
- Ice – cream
- Freezable / refrigerated ready meals are a great option – especially if energy levels are low



Tips to help you eat and drink well

If you are still a bit short of breath and/or get tired very quickly when eating:

- Take a break during your meal if you become short of breath.
- Take your time. Eat slowly. Take small mouthfuls.
- When drinking, sip slowly, avoid continuous swallows.
- Seat yourself in an upright supported chair when you are eating and drinking and remain upright for 30 minutes after.
- Try not to speak during meals. This can make you more breathless.
- Choose foods that are soft and easy to chew. For example, stews / lasagne / cottage pies / mashed potato with baked beans / milk puddings / soft cheeses.
- Add sauce or gravy to moisten foods.
- Resting before meals may help.

Nutritional Supplement Drinks

During your hospital stay you may have been prescribed a nutritional drink, by the Dietitian. These may have been discontinued on hospital discharge. However, if your appetite does not recover and you continue to lose weight, please ask your GP to refer you to the Community Dietetic service.

If you have a working scales at home it is a good idea to keep an eye on your weight.

For further dietary information and recipes, to help your recovery go to the HSE.ie website and search for "Making the Most of Every Bite".

Re-establishing Activities of Daily Living (ADL)

This section is aimed at helping you to take a graded return to normal routine with the help of your Occupational Therapist.

Occupational Therapists promote health and wellbeing by improving a person's ability to complete activities of daily living (ADLs). ADLs are meaningful activities that we need, want or are expected to do. ADL's are unique to each person.

As COVID-19 is a new illness, we are still learning about how people will recover from it. How quickly you are able to get back to doing ADL's will vary depending on the person. It will depend on things like how sick you were, how long your hospital stay was and whether you were in ICU or in a high dependency setting.

It will be necessary to take a graded approach to re-introducing these ADLs into your routine. You will need to slowly build up your strength and endurance after an illness. It is important to engage with your rehabilitation therapists on the ward. Your Occupational Therapist will help you achieve just that in this section.

It is important to realise that engaging in ADLs is also a form of rehab like physical exercises



Creating your own ADL rehab programme

COVID-19 affects each person differently, so give yourself time to recover. You may feel pressure to resume your usual activities quickly, but don't rush.

Step 1

Think of three ADL's that are important to you (Hint; these don't have to be complex tasks, it can be something as simple as making a cup of tea)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Step 2

Rate these activities by energy level required to help you space them out during the day; do this by giving them each a star rating (1 star = low energy required, 5 = high energy) Try this below and colour in the stars to rate the activity

Activity 1	
Activity 2	
Activity 3	

Step 3

Now you know what you want to do and how much energy it takes, the next step is creating a timetable that works for you to include these ADLs with rest time between each.

Below is an example of different ADL's and how you can incorporate these into your daily routine. Always remember to take rests between different activities:

Wake Up	Make bed, read daily news, Brush teeth, shower,
Breakfast	Have breakfast with a family member
Mid Morning	Listen to music, reading, relaxation practise
Lunch	Focus on having and preparing lunch
Mid-afternoon	Relaxation, walk in the garden
Dinner	Enjoy a meal, if this is something you have to prepare make sure to take adequate rests
Evening	Relax, unwind, call a friend

Please see the appendix of this booklet for your own ADL timetable



GOAL, PLAN, DO, CHECK!

The 'Goal, Plan, Do, Check' method is an effective tool for keeping a structure to your rehab and ensuring you are taking a graded approach to tasks and recovery.

You may want to consider how you plan ADL's: it might be useful to consider Pacing and Planning of these ADLs.

GOAL

- Identify what are the ADL's that you would like to do today

PLAN

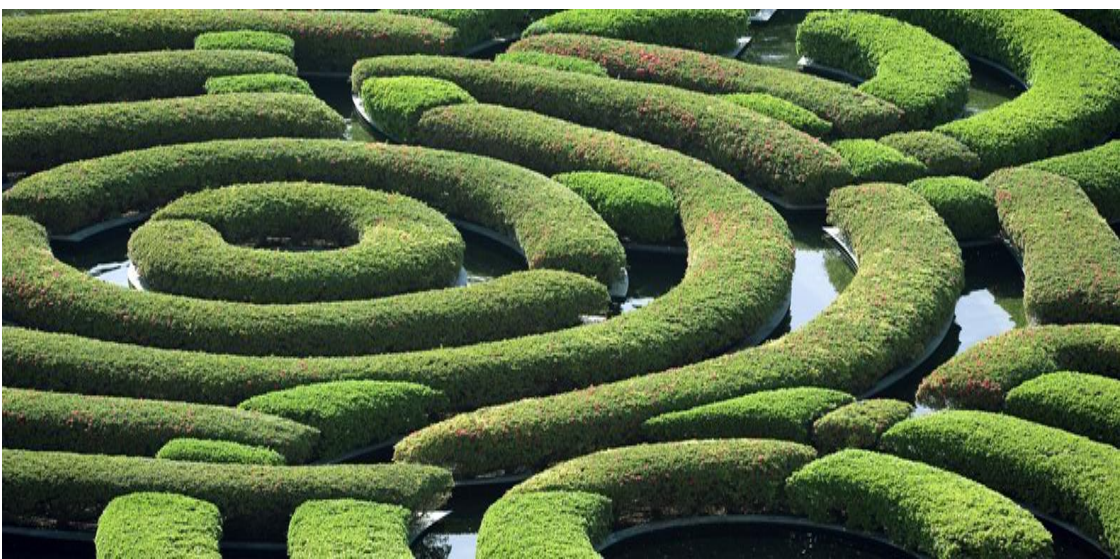
- Plan how you will achieve these goals - you might find the use of the diary template above useful for this

DO

- Complete your plan allowing for changes
- Remember each day is different

Check

- At the end of the day you might want to review your plan and reflect how you managed to complete the ADL's



The 3 Ps principle (Pace, Plan and Prioritise)

Pace

Pacing is a way of increasing your activity level without stirring up your fatigue too much

Top Pacing Tips

- ✓ Sit and rest during the activity wherever possible
- ✓ Break activities into smaller tasks and spread them throughout the day
- ✓ Build some rests into your activities – this will help you to recharge your energy

Plan

Look at the activities that you would normally do on a daily and weekly basis and develop a plan for how you can spread these activities out over the week. You might want to consider the different activities and how these can effect you, for example laundry and housework can make you feel more breathless and fatigued – you might want to plan to do these on different days

Top planning tips

- ✓ Collect all items you need before you start the task
- ✓ If you have family or friends that can help ask them

Prioritise

Some activities are necessary, but others aren't.

Ask yourself the following questions to help understand which of your activities are necessary.

Top prioritising tips

- ✓ What do I need to do today?
- ✓ What do I want to do today?
- ✓ What can wait until tomorrow or another day?



Below are some examples of how you might plan some everyday activities using the PPP system

Bathing and showering		
Pace	Plan	Prioritise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow yourself plenty of time and take rests as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use long handled equipment Open an inside door to allow good ventilation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is a daily bath or shower necessary? Can you have a strip-wash at the sink instead?

Cooking		
Pace	Plan	Prioritise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spread the preparation throughout the day. Peel the vegetables in the morning Sit to prepare food if possible Take rests during or after cooking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cook larger amounts if possible and freeze extra portions Get everything ready before you need you need to start Cook foods that take a shorter preparation if possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have ready meals available for days that you are very tired Can you delegate the cooking to someone else in the house?

Of course it is important to remember it can be a big adjustment having to think differently about how you do things which were normal, simple tasks. Here are some tips which you may find useful to help you form some new habits:

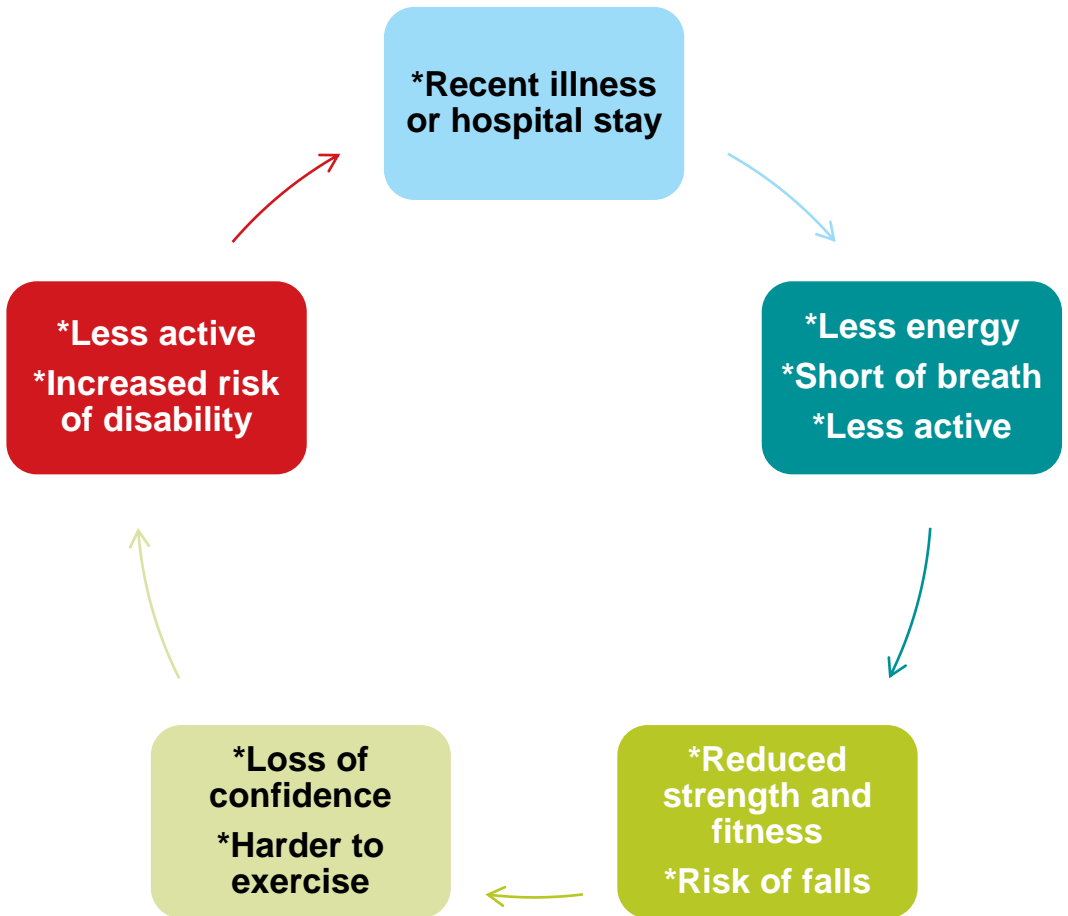
- Write a list of your plans and stick it on the fridge
- Start off with a small change and build on this
- Explain to others why you are changing a habit, get support and help from others if needed
- Reward yourself with a treat
- Don't worry if you fall back into your old habits, everyone does when they try to change, look at your plan and start afresh
- Find a new way of doing something with pacing rather than stopping it all together

If you feel that you are not making progress with your physical recovery or would like some advice or support, it is recommended that you contact your GP who will be able to make appropriate recommendations.

Recovering from managing breathlessness

It is normal to feel tired and short of breath after being unwell. You may also feel weak as you have not been able to do as much as normal.

Being active can help you recover quicker, and get you back to feeling stronger and doing the things you love.



Managing your breathlessness and tiredness

Pace yourself

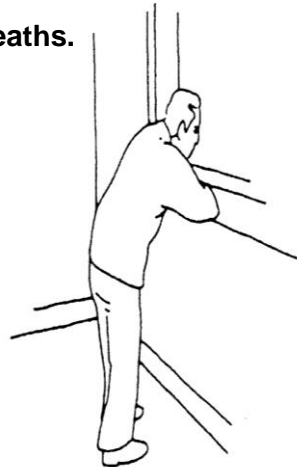
- Decide on what needs to be done and spread the tasks throughout the day.
- Time activities for when you have the most energy.
- Take regular breaks to avoid over doing it or under doing it.
- Avoid holding your breath when doing a task.
- Try not to talk and move at the same time.
- Allow yourself more time to complete each activity e.g. dressing, washing, going upstairs etc.

Breathing Techniques and Positions of Ease

If you are feeling short of breath, you may find it helpful to do breathing exercises to help you control your breathing.

1. Choose a comfortable position.
2. Relax your shoulders and breathe in through your nose.
3. Breathe out through your mouth using pursed lips.
4. Continue until you feel your breathing is under control.

Make out-breaths twice as long as in-breaths.



The muscles you use to support your neck and shoulders also help with breathing. Using these positions can support these muscles and help ease shortness of breath.

How do I exercise?

Tips for getting started:

- Get Up, Get Dressed, Get Moving
- Avoid bed rest
- Return to normal day to day activities
- Gradually introduce activities (walking, climbing the stairs, housework, gardening)

What exercises should I do?

The exercises listed in this booklet will help you build up your muscle strength and you should aim to do them daily at first. As you get stronger try to keep doing the exercises at least two days a week.

Try doing them as part of your daily routine.

Example - The sitting exercises can be done when watching TV and the standing exercises can be easily be done when waiting for the kettle to boil, or when brushing your teeth etc.

Did you know...

Each time you exercise, you stimulate immune cells in your body that recognise and kill virus infected cells. It is likely that keeping active will boost our immune system to help minimise the effects of the virus, reduce your symptoms and speed up recovery.



Seated Exercises

1

Knee Extensions

- Sit supported with feet on ground.
- Tighten your thigh muscles and straighten your leg as you bring your toes towards you.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Slowly lower your leg.



2

Arm Raises

- Sitting upright and supported in chair.
- Hold on to a small hand weight (Or a tin of beans, water bottle etc.)
- Begin with both arms relaxed on your thighs.
- Raise one arm up towards the ceiling.
- Slowly lower arm back down.
- Alternate arms.



3

Sit to Stand

- Sitting on a chair bring your bottom forward.
- Place feet behind knees.
- Relax arms across your chest.
- Lean forward and stand up.
- Bend forward and use your legs to lower your bottom back on to the seat.

If needed you can use your arms to help. As you get stronger, you should be able to do this without holding on.

Aim to do each exercise 10 times, twice per day (or as able).



Standing Exercises

Always have a firm surface nearby to hold on to if needed when doing these exercises.

4

Hip flexion

- Standing upright with feet apart.
- Raise one knee up towards your chest while keeping your back straight.
- Slowly lower leg down. Alternate legs.



5

Squats

- Stand and place your feet hip width apart.
- Bend both knees as far as you can while keeping your heels in contact with the ground.
- Hold for five seconds. Squeeze your bottom and straighten your knees to return to upright standing.



6

Heel Rises

- Standing with feet apart.
- Raise both heels off the floor.
- Hold for five seconds.
- Slowly lower to ground.



Progress to standing on one leg (with or without support) and raise heel off floor.

Aim to do each exercise 10 times, twice per day (or as able).

7

Wall Press

- Place your hands flat on the wall and then step backwards so your arms are straight.
- Bend your elbows and allow your shoulders to come closer to the wall.
- Now straighten your arms again and push yourself away from the wall.



8

Step ups

- Place one foot on to a step and step up bringing your other foot on to the step.
- Step back down.
- Repeat 10 times leading with the right foot, then 10 times leading with the left foot.



Aim to do each exercise 10 times, twice per day (or as able).



Stop Exercising if you develop any of the following:

- Chest pain
- Severe breathlessness
- Dizziness
- Coldness
- Clamminess
- Sudden muscle or joint pain

If you have any other medical conditions, please discuss with your physiotherapist. See contact numbers on the back of this booklet.

Back to fitness

When you are feeling stronger and have more energy, it is also important to do 'cardiovascular exercise' such as walking that increases your heart rate and breathing rate. This will help improve your overall fitness. Try to warm up and cool down for a few minutes before and after exercising. This could be marching on the spot or walking around the garden.

What exercise should I do?

You will need to pace yourself initially - it is best to start slowly and build up gradually. We recommend you set simple goals to achieve each week. Gradually building up your walking is a good goal to set each week. Walking is a great way to recover your fitness.

How long should I walk for?

Everyone is different and the following is a guideline only. You can adapt it to your own energy levels. By six weeks after discharge you should aim to be walking 30 minutes on more than five days a week. This should be done at a pace that allows you to be able to talk as you walk, but not very easily. Dancing, cycling and gardening are also excellent ways to regain your fitness.

Week 1:	Up to 10 minutes on <u>five or more days a week.</u>
Week 2:	Up to 15 minutes on <u>five or more days a week.</u>
Week 3:	Up to 20 minutes on <u>five or more days a week.</u>
Week 4:	Up to 25 minutes on <u>five or more days a week.</u>
Week 5-6:	Up to 30 minutes on <u>five or more days a week.</u>

Suitability	Exercise option	Link
Older adult	Siel Blue Ireland	https://www.facebook.com/SielBlueIreland
Older adult	Tallaght University Hospital – Gerry's Gym for the Older Person	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFn1udnrNNg
Older adult	Exwell Medical Home Exercise Programme and Video Support	https://www.exwell.ie/resource
All age groups	The Body Coach	YouTube: The Body Coach TV
For those with other health conditions	The American College of Sports Medicine	https://www.exerciseismedicine.org/support_page.php/rx-for-health-series/

National guidelines for physical activity

As you regain your fitness, you should aim to meet the National Guidelines for Physical Activity for Ireland.

Guidelines for Adults

At least 30 minutes a day of moderate activity on 5 days a week (or 150 minutes a week).

Alternatively, you can do 75 minutes of vigorous activity or a combination of both.

Moderate Activity	Vigorous Activity
Increased breathing and heart rate but still able to carry on a conversation. Warm or sweating slightly, comfortable pace.	Breathing heavily, cannot keep a conversation going, faster heart rate and sweating, concentrating hard.

Aim to add strength and balance activities 2-3 times per week. Examples of these activities are represented below.

Be active

at least

150

minutes
moderate intensity
per week

increased breathing
able to talk



OR

or a combination of both

at least

75

minutes
vigorous intensity
per week

breathing fast
difficulty talking



to keep muscles, bones and joints strong

Build strength

on at least
2 days a week



Minimise sedentary time

Break up periods of inactivity



Improve balance

For older adults, to reduce the chance of frailty and falls
2 days a week



Psychological Health after COVID-19

COVID-19 and critical care, are scenarios where, on a personal level, much is at stake. In such situations, our nervous systems tend to react in three primary ways, known as the fight, flight or freeze states. We do not always recognise that this has happened, but you may *feel* it in two ways:

- ❑ Physically, as stress or fatigue (felt in and by the body) or
- ❑ Mentally as anxiety, low mood, anger or other negative emotions

Stress that goes unmanaged can prevent us from taking further actions towards recovering full psychological and physical health. However if well managed, negative emotions and stress can also serve as powerful positive motivators. After illness our thinking skills can be temporarily affected, which may make it more likely to experience stress, however with appropriate support, even feelings of stress and anxiety, although these feel unpleasant, can actually increase the likelihood of taking decisive action and help us to build a consistent momentum towards an optimal recovery.

Health anxiety and COVID-19

In pandemics, people who have already had the virus can feel they are stigmatised and worry about contaminating or infecting others around them or about contracting another illness or infection themselves. It is not uncommon to become more aware of bodily or physical symptoms. This may lead to scanning or paying particular attention to changes in bodily sensations. However managing hypervigilance about physical symptoms will be important in the process of recovery. Vigilance to physical symptoms following illness is often helpful and protective in the initial days after returning home from hospital but as time passes continued vigilance may be a sign that you have become hyper-vigilant to your body, which can interfere with your recovery. If you notice you have become hyper-vigilant to your body and that this is leading to excess worry about your health or interfering with your ability to continue with activities of daily living, it may help to speak to your GP or to discuss this with a Psychologist.





In a Nutshell:

Stress and anxiety arise when something we care about is at stake. Self-compassion and stress management are crucial to recovery from illness. Psychological wellbeing can influence physical, functional and social aspects of recovery and rehabilitation. It is worth remembering that not all aspects of recovery from COVID-19 will be challenging. Many people experience positive psychological changes, including a sense of gratitude or the desire to help others. However, if you have experienced high levels of distress as a result of COVID-19 or if your body has been put under stress, you might continue to feel this way for a period after you return home. This is to be expected - you have been through a stressful situation.

- Be kind to yourself and give your mind and body time to recover -

Stress

When we have experienced a prolonged period of stress, without the opportunity to recover, this can lead to a state of stress known as 'auto-stress'

When our body is in auto-stress, it is usually the result of an accumulation of stress over time, but our nervous systems can also be 'tipped over' into an auto-stress mode by a discrete event.

This may be explained using the idea of autoimmune disorders where the immune system begins to target the body, instead of protecting it. Auto-stress transforms our normal stress response into something that begins to attack the self rather than protecting it.

Stress is simply the body's normal reaction in threatening situations where what we care about is at stake. However, if we have experienced prolonged stress, we may notice we experience physical stress symptoms, without any clear reason (or stressor). You may have been hearing stressful information about COVID-19 before your hospital admission, and you may be continuing to hear about COVID-19 since your discharge.

Signs that your body may be in an auto-stress mode include:

- Chest tightness and feeling like you can't breathe
- Muscle tension, aches and pains
- Headaches
- Difficulty sleeping
- Restlessness or an inability to relax
- Heart palpitations
- Digestive issues



Traumatic Stress

COVID-19 and its treatment can increase exposure to another form of stress - traumatic stress

Reactions to traumatic events can range from mild, creating minor disruptions to daily life to reactions, more commonly associated with post-traumatic stress disorder, that are severe and debilitating. If you have experienced trauma, the fear or distress associated with the traumatic experience or event often manifests in two main ways:

- ❑ You may re-experience aspects of the trauma, sometimes in the form of nightmares, or intrusive images or memories, for example, of your time in hospital
- ❑ You may also find yourself actively avoiding any reminders of the events, or simply feel numb
- ❑ You may feel physically on alert, or jumpy



If you are experiencing these symptoms and they do not resolve by themselves within a month from when you returned home or from when these specific symptoms first began, please speak to your GP about a referral to a psychologist who can help you to process your experience and help you resolve these symptoms



Quick guides for Recover & Rehabilitation:

The following quick guides address four key areas important in the recovery of psychological wellbeing following illness and critical care after COVID-19 and are designed to equip you with evidenced-based strategies and information to support you to manage your recovery after returning home

- ❑ **Getting a good night's sleep**
- ❑ **Support with thinking skills after illness**
- ❑ **Tips to support rehabilitation**

How can I improve my sleep pattern?

A healthy lifestyle and a positive approach can help you to achieve a healthy sleep pattern. You may have lost a lot of weight when you were ill and this weight loss may have to be built up again. Try to stick to a **healthy balanced diet**. Eat small regular meals if you find this easier.

Drinking enough fluids is also important for sleep and mood.

Be active. Gradually increase your activity level. Be flexible. It is important that you do not overdo it, only do what you are able to do. Stop an activity when you feel tired. Finding a balance between activity and rest is called pacing and is important when recovering from illness.

Make time for **relaxation**, rest and days out. Take some 'you time' - do something you enjoy.

If you feel **mentally tired** - make lists. Take one thing at a time. **Spend time with other people**, especially those you care about most.



When recovering from COVID-19 you may notice that you are sleeping for longer than usual. You may also find you want to sleep for periods during the day. This is a natural part of the way that the body responds to and recovers from infection. A good night's sleep helps us to feel healthy and calm. Sleep makes our daily routines easier.

Your goal will be to sleep only at night and to reduce the time spent sleeping and in bed during the day.

The main kinds of sleep problems people have are:

- Difficulty getting to sleep
- Difficulty staying asleep
- Restless sleep and bad dreams

The good news is that there are things you can do to get a good night's sleep.

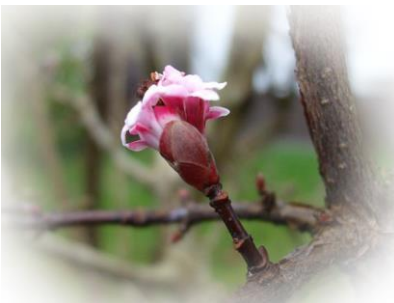


I wake during the night, what should I do?

If you wake during the night and toss and turn:

- Tell yourself not to worry. Loosing some sleep is not harmful
- **DO NOT** think about problems. Write them down to think about at another time
- **DO** something to trigger another sleep cycle, e.g. read, walk about
- Try a relaxation exercise
- Keeping a sleep diary or using a FitBit may be helpful to see what your sleep patterns look like

Relaxation



One easy relaxation exercise is to pretend that you are smelling a rose. Breathe in. Count to five. Breath out slowly, counting to five, allow yourself to feel more relaxed. Continue this until you fall asleep.

Your state of mind can influence how well you sleep

- Some people like quietness and others like some sounds. Keep a radio or CD player next to your bed — plug in your earphones, listen to something you find relaxing
- Nodcasts: **www.sleepcouncil.org.uk** are a collection of different sounds some of which you may find relaxing.
- Penguin Sleep Tales: (**www.penguin.co.uk**) Downloadable audio stories designed to encourage sleep
- If you worry when you are in bed, keep a notebook beside you to write the worries down. Then try to think of pleasant things
- Turn the clock away from you so you cannot see the time. You may wish to look at the clock when you are awake but doing so can increase your worry about not being asleep.
- **If you are breathless at night or these strategies don't help please speak to your doctor.**

General 'healthy sleep' tips

DO keep a regular bed & wake time schedule. Go to bed and get up at the same time each day, including at weekends

DO reduce napping during the day - even if you feel tired or have had a bad night's sleep. You can lie down and try some relaxation instead

DO sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillow. Make sure your bedroom is, dark, quiet and between 16-18°

DO make your room peaceful. Remove clutter. A plant, photographs or calming pictures can make the environment feel relaxing and restful

DO establish a regular, relaxing bedtime routine, beginning about one hour before bedtime. Have a bath, read, listen to music or a relaxation tape. Exercise too close to bed can prevent sleep

DON'T use alcohol to help you to sleep

DON'T work, watch TV, have bright lights or use a computer in the bedroom

DON'T smoke, drink tea or coffee, or eat two to three hours before bedtime



Changes to thinking skills after illness

After an illness such as COVID-19 it is common to experience a “brain fog”.

“Brain fog” is a term used to describe problems with concentration, processing information, short-term memory or “thinking straight”.

Problems with concentration and attention can include difficulty:

- Maintaining focus and attention during conversations or activities such as following a film or sporting event
- Doing more than one thing at a time
- Following instructions especially if there is noise or distractions in the background
- Finishing tasks or making mistakes

These types of problems do not usually affect medium or long-term memory.

Recalling information and events from weeks, months or years ago is not normally a problem.



What Does a Brain Fog feel like?

You may feel like there is a cloud hanging over you that makes it hard to think straight

Some people describe it as similar to being:

- Forgetful
- Confused
- Unable to focus or concentrate
- Tired or low energy

The symptoms can:

- Vary from mild to severe
- Be worse when you are tired
- Be frustrating and worrying
- Be “invisible” to others
- Interfere with carrying out everyday tasks that involve focus or sustained mental activity

I am having problems with conversations, what can help?

If you are worried that you are not following conversations you can feel isolated and worry about when you will not be able to interact with others.

It is important that you stay connected with others.

Consider explaining to family and friends that since your illness you are having some difficulty following conversations or instructions. They may not be aware unless you tell them. They will want to help.

You can:

- Ask people to slow down
- Clarify what you think you have heard
- Write it down if you think you won't remember what has been said
- Who, what, where, when, why and how are good strategies to help you to remember information

What else can I do?

Reading, writing, puzzles, and listening to the radio will all help to build concentration.

As you recover it is important that you:

- Are kind to yourself
- Don't criticise yourself
- Have a good sleep routine
- Have a daily routine – include time for things you must do e.g. shop and time for what you like to do e.g. walk, relaxation



Could anything else be causing these difficulties?

Changes in thinking skills are common after illness and often improve over time.

However, sometimes other factors such as pain, sleep disturbance, anxiety, depression, and medications can contribute to these difficulties.

If you feel the problems are not improving please talk to your doctor

What can I help?

Strategies that can help thinking skills include:

- Do one thing at a time
- Make a schedule or plan of tasks to be done
- Break the tasks into steps Plan how you will do each one
- Make sure you have what you need before you begin a task
- Use strategies to stay on task such as lists, calendars, a white board. These are habits everyone should have!
- Put reminders and set alarms on your phone
- Reduce distractions. You will think best in an environment with no distractions. Turn off the radio, or tell others in your house you need some quiet time
- Take regular breaks – your brain is working harder than you realise. A healthy brain needs a five minute break after 25 minutes of focussed concentration. You will need to adjust to take more breaks during your recovery.



Tips to support Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation aims to get you back to doing the things that are important to you. This will help you to feel that you are living and not just surviving. You may have lost confidence after being in hospital

**Be kind to
yourself and
others:**

- Take one day at a time. It is okay not to feel okay
- When you have a bad day, STOP, take a breath. Ask yourself “What can I do now to take care of myself?”
- Stay in touch with others
- Have a routine and stick to it

Be patient and please remember

- ❑ Rehab takes time. You have been through a lot
- ❑ One set back does not mean you are not getting better
- ❑ Everything you do is a learning opportunity. If something doesn't work, you have learned that
- ❑ Just like getting fit, practice will make an impact
- ❑ Sometimes you may not recognise progress but it all adds up over time

Using strategies is not cheating!

- ❑ If you feel confused or that your memory is affected write things down on a whiteboard or diary
- ❑ Use checklists or reminders on your phone
- ❑ If someone is speaking too fast ask them to slow down or to say it again

Maintain structure to your week

- ❑ It is important to have a balance of different activities throughout the day and week
- ❑ Keep doing things we all need to do (e.g. sleep, eat, shop).
- ❑ Do things you want to do (leisure, exercise)
- ❑ Make time for fun and relaxation

Keeping structure and routine will help you to feel in control

Remember that all progress adds up – getting you back doing what you want to do



Goals are important

Ask yourself what would you like to be able to do?

What is important to you?

This is your goal.

Break it down into small, manageable goals such as walking for 10 minutes. Meeting goals (and recording it somewhere) will help you to keep going even when it feels hard.

This might mean doing something you have already done, maybe doing it quicker. For example you now might be able to walk to your post office in 10 minutes but hope to be able to do it in eight minutes. This is an achievable goal and one you will know you have met.

Another goal might be to increase the distance you walk. You will be able to see if you are making progress.

You may have been given an exercise programme. Breaking this into goals, like increasing the number of exercises you can do is also progress.



Taking care of your wellbeing

This can be difficult if you are not feeling well or when there has been a change of structure.

- Even if you don't feel hungry, eat a well balanced diet
- Drink water
- Create routines for meals. Set reminders or alerts on your phone if you need to
- Limit the amount of time you spend listening to bad news
- Get enough sleep, and rest

Some Practical Tips to help restore your circadian rhythm and promote sleep include to:

- Avoid caffeine after 12 noon
- Keep alcohol intake at a reduced level
- Get some fresh air and exercise or move your body daily, but avoid vigorous physical exercise within three hours of bedtime
- Establish good 'sleep hygiene' by keeping your bedroom free of TVs, smartphones and laptops. Reserve this room for sleep, and restful activities, such as meditation, prayer or reading



The majority of people who recover from COVID-19 go through a process of adjusting and rehabilitation, which takes time. The staff at TUH wish for you to know that there is a multi-disciplinary service network available to answer your questions, and support you with your individual process of recovery.

Globally, many people are being exposed to COVID-19 and are undergoing medical treatment for this infection. Although as a hospital and as a society we do not yet know the full impact of COVID-19, we hope that this manual will help you to kick-start and sustain your recovery and will become a practical resource that you can rely on to access further support available through both Tallaght University Hospital and within your local community.

If, as a patient or family member you are experiencing any difficulties, if you have questions about any ongoing symptoms you are experiencing, or you wish to ask about aspects of your hospital experience that you are worried about or cannot remember, please use the directory and further supports sections at the back of this manual. We understand that at the time of discharge from hospital, patients may not feel up to reading this information, so if you are a relative, please hold on to this manual and pass it on when your family member is ready.

HSCP Department Directory

<u>Department</u>	<u>Directory</u>
Dietetics	01-414 2484
Audiology	01-414 3151
Psychology	01-414 4599
Social Work	01-414 2461/2462
Physiotherapy	01-414 2750
Occupational	01-414 3592
Speech & Language Therapy	01-414 2776/2778
Tallaght University Hospital Switch-board	01-414 2000

COVID-19

Community Support Services

HSE Advice Line

- ☐ Call from 8am – 8pm Monday to Friday
- ☐ 10am to 5pm Saturday and Sunday
- ☐ Callsave 1850 24 1850
- ❖ **Community Response.** Local authorities have set up local Community Response Forums in each local authority area to ensure people who are living alone, cocooning or isolating at home are reached and helped at this time. These comprise the local authority, HSE, County Champions, An Post, Community Welfare Service, An Garda Síochána, other State organisations, charities and other stakeholders. They ensure people can access deliveries of groceries, medicine and fuels.

South Dublin COVID19 Community Response Forum :

- ☐ 1800 240519 / covidsupport@sdublincoco.ie

Dublin City Council :

- ☐ 01 2228555 / covidsupport@dublincity.ie

South Dublin County Council :

- ☐ 01 4149000 covidsupport@sdublincoco.ie

<https://agefriendlyireland.ie/category/coronavirus-covid-19/importantcontact-numbers/>

The Age Action Information Service

- ☐ This service is available Monday to Friday 9.30am - 5pm on 01 4756989.

Family Carers Ireland (familycarers.ie) have developed an Emergency Care Plan which is a useful tool for anyone who provides care to another person: You can access this by downloading it from the above website or by calling Careline 1800 240724.

Co-Vid 19 Support Helpline

Set up by Alone, in conjunction with the Department of Health and the HSE, this line is open 8am-8pm Monday - Sunday: 0818 222 024. It and the above local authority phone lines can offer the assistance to those who require it, with the following:

- Shopping for food, fuel and other essential household items
- Transport to medical appointments
- Delivery of hot meals through local meals on wheels services
- Collection of prescribed medicines
- Social Supports
- Garda related matters
- Further information can be accessed at :
<https://alone.ie/alone-launch-a-covid-19-support-line-for-older-peopleworking-in-collaboration-with-the-department-of-health-and-the-hse/>

Supermarkets Priority Times for Older and vulnerable persons
(remember: times may be subject to change)

- Dunnes Stores – 11am – 1pm daily
- Aldi – 11am – 1pm daily
- Lidl – 9am – 11am
- Tesco – Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings up to 9am



Services from An Post

An Post staff are providing extra services for older people and people who are staying at home: You

can register with An Post to have a postman or postwoman call to your house during their delivery route: <https://www.anpost.com/Community-Support/Request-a-CheckIn>

A member of your family, a friend or a healthcare worker can register for you.

The postal worker can contact the Alone helpline on your behalf if you need help to access local services.

If you have post that you want delivered, you can put a sign in your window that says I HAVE MAIL. The postman/postwoman will collect it and post it free of charge.

Pharmacies

Temporary laws have been put in place to allow GPs to send prescriptions to pharmacies by email. This means that you may not need to go to your GP surgery if you need a prescription for medication. If you have a prescription that needs to be renewed, your local pharmacy can do this for you in most cases.

If you cannot go to the pharmacy, you can contact the local community support number listed above. The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland has issued guidelines on the delivery of medicines through voluntary and state bodies.

Access to Technology for Older People

The Age Action Getting Started KIT materials supports older people to learn, use, and be

confident using smartphones and applications so they can keep in touch with their loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic. The material can be

downloaded or older people can call 01 8730372 leave their name and address and Age Action will post the How to Guides within 10 days.

COVID-19 Tech (01-9633288) Volunteer tech helpline for older people who are cocooning in Ireland

Vodafone have launched a new Tech Advice/Smart Phone Support Line for older people. (01) 8731166, open Mon - Fri 9am to 6pm

Mental Health

Aware - Supporting Light Through Depression Tel. 1800 80 48 48

The Samaritans Tel. 116 123 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If you need a response immediately, it's best to call on the phone. This number is FREE to call. Tel: 116 123. Email: jo@samaritans.ie
Website: www.samaritans.org

Pieta House provides free therapy to those engaging in self-harm, with suicidal ideation, or bereaved by suicide. Freephone and no referral needed. Tel: 1800 247 247

Jigsaw: Offering support to younger people going through a hard time, or for those worried about a young person in your life. www.jigsaw.ie / <https://www.jigsaw.ie/news-and-events/post/covid19-what-were-doing>

Government of Ireland Advice: Maintaining Your Mental Health, Staying Active and Staying Connected:
<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/together/>

☐ **ALONE and the Samaritans** have created a direct referral line for callers to the ALONE helpline who are very distressed or possibly suicidal and where an ALONE staff or volunteer feels they do not have the competency to give the caller the appropriate support

Exercise

Outdoor Leisure in Local Parks

Dublin's four local authorities now have a designated time for cocooners who wish to exercise in their local parks.

The hours of 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm will be reserved in all parks across Dublin city and county for people who are / have been cocooning. This includes over-70s and medically vulnerable people.

Age and Opportunity have created some great online Movement Minutes sessions for older adults, you can watch these on their YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRw9a_cCjV8

Arts and Music

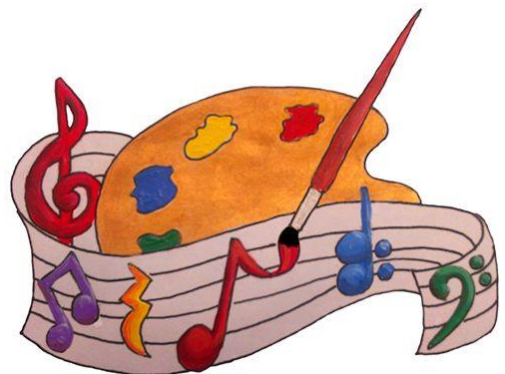
The National Gallery of Ireland have launched virtual tours of their collections on their website, you can peruse the beautiful gallery at your own pace and wonder at the various rooms and works on display: <https://www.nationalgallery.ie/virtual-tour>

Theatre has also made its way online with The Abbey Theatre launching their 'Dear Ireland' series, a national conversation of 50 monologues which were streamed live on The Abbey's YouTube channel over 4 days at 7.30pm from Tuesday April 28th to Friday May 1st. You can access the recording via: <https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/whats-on/dear-ireland/>

Many Irish and UK theatres have put performances online during the pandemic, a google search of 'what's on in theatre' will bring you to a list of what is available to view and where these performances are available.

County Council Library Services are delivering books to its most vulnerable members who are cocooning at this time, bringing boxes of books of members in an effort to help reduce the effects of social isolation. To access the service call your local library or its headquarters.

Creative Ireland and Healthy Ireland will support a partnership with the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland called Get Ireland Making.



Bereavement Supports

As Ireland's only national charity dedicated to death, dying and bereavement, the Irish Hospice Foundation is keeping the Irish public, informed and supported in matters relating to end-of-life and bereavement care in these exceptional times.

The IHF have developed a 'Care & Inform' Info Hub to respond to the COVID-19 emergency with all information in line with current HSE and Government guidance.

The Irish Hospice Foundation 'Care & Inform' Info Hub Information can be accessed via <https://hospicefoundation.ie/covid19careandinform/>

or by calling: 01 679 3188

- ❑ A Practical Guide for the Bereaved during Coronavirus 19: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f43301-covid-19-coronavirus-aguide-for-the-bereaved/> from the Department of Health and Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

HSE Bereavement and Grief during COVID-19 19

Advice and Information is available at the following:
<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/covid-19/bereavement-and-grief-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic.html>

Citizens Information

<https://whatsnew.citizensinformation.ie/2020/04/03/know-your-rights-covid-19-and-funerals/>

[https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/death/when someone dies in ireland.html](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/death/when_someone_dies_in_ireland.html)



National Organisations for Health Conditions offering Information Specific to Your Health and COVID-19 19:

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland provides advice and support for vulnerable people living alone during the coronavirus pandemic.

Alzheimer National Helpline team 1800 341 341 or by email at helpline@alzheimer.ie

Irish Cancer Society: If you are a cancer patient or a former cancer patient, you can get information and advice from the Irish Cancer Society Cancer Nurse via the

- ❑ Freephone Support Line on 1800 200 700
- ❑ Monday to Thursday: 9am - 8pm, Friday to Sunday: 9am - 5pm

COPD Ireland offer advice, information and

support to persons with respiratory conditions: <http://copd.ie/> Text the word COPD to 50444 to get a free information pack on Staying Well During Coronavirus.

Irish Asthma Society: <https://www.asthma.ie> has a range of leaflets and resources. You can also contact them on: Tel: 01 8178886 or email: nurse@asthmasociety.ie.

Arthritis Ireland Helpline is open Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm. Call: LoCall 1890 252 846 or 01-6618188 / Email:

helpline@arthritisireland.ie

Financial Supports

- For Exceptional Needs Payment
- Supplementary Welfare Allowance, you can
- contact your local community welfare officer/
- Intreo Office. You can access the details for your local office by calling 1890 800 024

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/28b9b5-list-of-officesadministering-supplementary-welfare-allowance-swa-in-dublin/>



St. Vincent De Paul

Tel. 01 8848200 - practical help, advice and a friendly ear

COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment

Payment

https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social_welfare/social_welfare_payments/unemployed_people/covid19_pandemic_unemployment_payment.html

❑ Short Time Work Support

If your employer reduces your hours to 3 days or less per week from your normal full-time hours, you can apply for a payment called Short Time Work Support which is a form of Jobseeker's Benefit:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/c20e1b-short-time-work-support.html>

Advocacy, Abuse and Violence Supports

HSE Safeguarding & Protection of Older Persons and Vulnerable Adults Teams Kildare, West Wicklow, Dublin West, Dublin South City, Dublin South West : Beech House, 101-102 Naas Business Park, Naas, Co. Kildare Tel: 045-920410 Email: Safeguarding.CHO7@hse.ie

- ❑ **Sage Advocacy**, Support and advocacy service for vulnerable adults, older people and healthcare patients, E-mail: 1850@sageadvocacy.ie, phone 1850 71 94 00 365 days a year 08:00 – 22:00
- ❑ **Women's Aid**- 24hr National Freephone helpline, Tel: 1800 341 900 / 01 678 8858 / Email: info@womensaid.ie
- ❑ **Men's Aid**- Tel: 01-5543811 / 01-5394277 E-mail: hello@mensaid.ie

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