



# COVID-19 Patient Information Booklet

*Disclaimer: The information in this booklet is based on current medical research which is rapidly evolving with Covid-19. General information is not intended to diagnose any medical condition or to replace your healthcare professional. Please consult your provider for personalized medical advice. Always seek the advice of a physician or other qualified healthcare provider with any questions regarding a medical condition.*

**Family Health Service**

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## What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a highly contagious virus that mainly attacks the lungs. It is transmitted through droplets created from sneezing and coughing from those infected. The virus enters the body via the nose, mouth and eyes.

### The most commonly reported symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- a new continuous cough
- a fever
- fatigue
- muscle aches
- shortness of breath when moving around
- sputum production
- loss of appetite/taste/smell.
- Others like: dizziness, pink eye, gastrointestinal symptoms

Some people may require hospitalization to treat these symptoms.

### The severity and duration of symptoms for people who have COVID-19 can vary.

For most people, symptoms last 7-14 days and will be very mild. To manage mild symptoms:

- stay hydrated
- take acetaminophen or ibuprofen if you have a temperature
- **Rest and move** about at regular intervals. Walk outside around your block without a mask at least one time daily. This needs to be done despite the weather.
- Some studies support taking Zinc 50 mg daily (equivalent to Zinc sulfate 220 *but not nasal Zinc*) and Vitamin C 1 gram three times per day for 7 days.

**If you need additional advice, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>**

# What do I do if my symptoms get worse?

**Monitor your symptoms regularly. If you get one of the following:**

- Worsening shortness of breath
- A new or returning fever
- Worsening ability to concentrate
- Chest pain
- Pulse oximeter shows a low oxygen level. *Family Health can provide a free oximeter to you for home monitoring of your oxygen saturation.*

**Please call your primary care for more advice or for a medical emergency, dial 911 .**

## How might I feel after having COVID-19?

You may find that your symptoms last for weeks or possibly months, especially if you have been in hospital or had severe COVID-19 symptoms. This pack contains information on how to manage the following symptoms:

- **Severe fatigue**
- **Ongoing breathlessness**
- **Muscle weakness**
- **Post viral cough**
- **Difficulties with memory/confusion**

This might make it more difficult to do the things you are normally able to do, such as housework, bathing, getting dressed or walking up and down the stairs.

### How are you feeling?

As well as the physical symptoms listed above, it is very common to experience feelings of anxiety and low mood. Some people who have had treatment in the hospital may also experience anxiety or unpleasant memories about their stay. **For further support, please see page 23 & 24.**

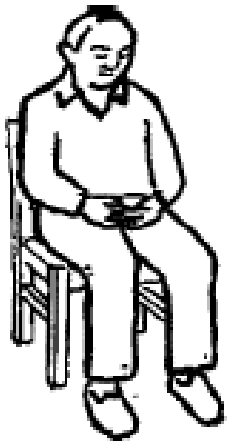
# Positions to manage breathlessness

Following COVID-19 you may find you have continued breathlessness.

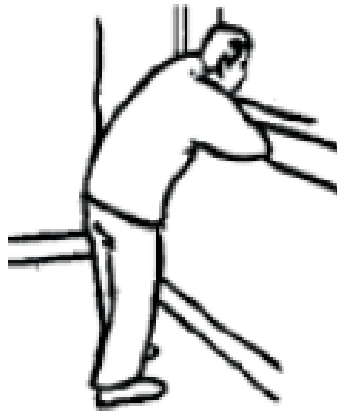
You should monitor this and if it gets worse seek further review from your primary care provider.

These positions can help ease your breathlessness and can be used when resting or when walking.

**Relaxed sitting**



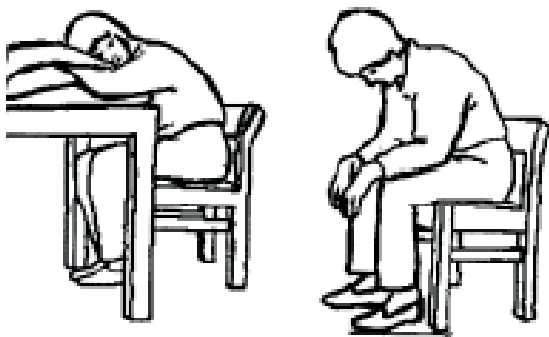
**Forward lean standing**



**Backward Lean Standing**



**Forward lean sitting**



**High side lying**



# Exercises to help manage your breathing

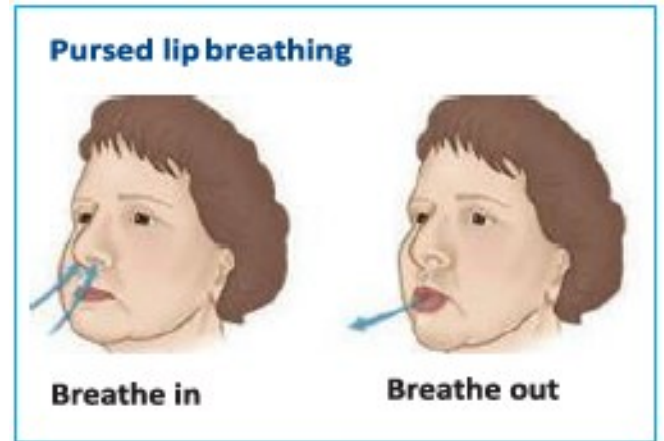
Breathing exercises can help you manage your breathlessness and reduce its impact on your every day activities.

## Breathing control

- Take a slow breath in through your nose
- Try to relax your shoulders and neck
- Allow the air to fill up from the bottom of your lungs to the top of your chest
- Breathe gently out through pursed lips

(as if you were going to blow out a candle) to create space for the next breath in

- Lay on your stomach each night prior to sleep and take 10 deep breaths.



## Breathing control while walking

This will help you walk on the flat, climb stairs and negotiate slopes. Try to keep your shoulders and upper chest relaxed and use your breathing control. Time your breathing with your stepping.

- **Breathe in – 2 step**
- **Breathe out – 4 steps**

## Keep cool

Make sure you have good air circulation in the room by opening a window or door. Use a wet flannel to cool the area around your nose and mouth this can help reduced the sensation of breathlessness.

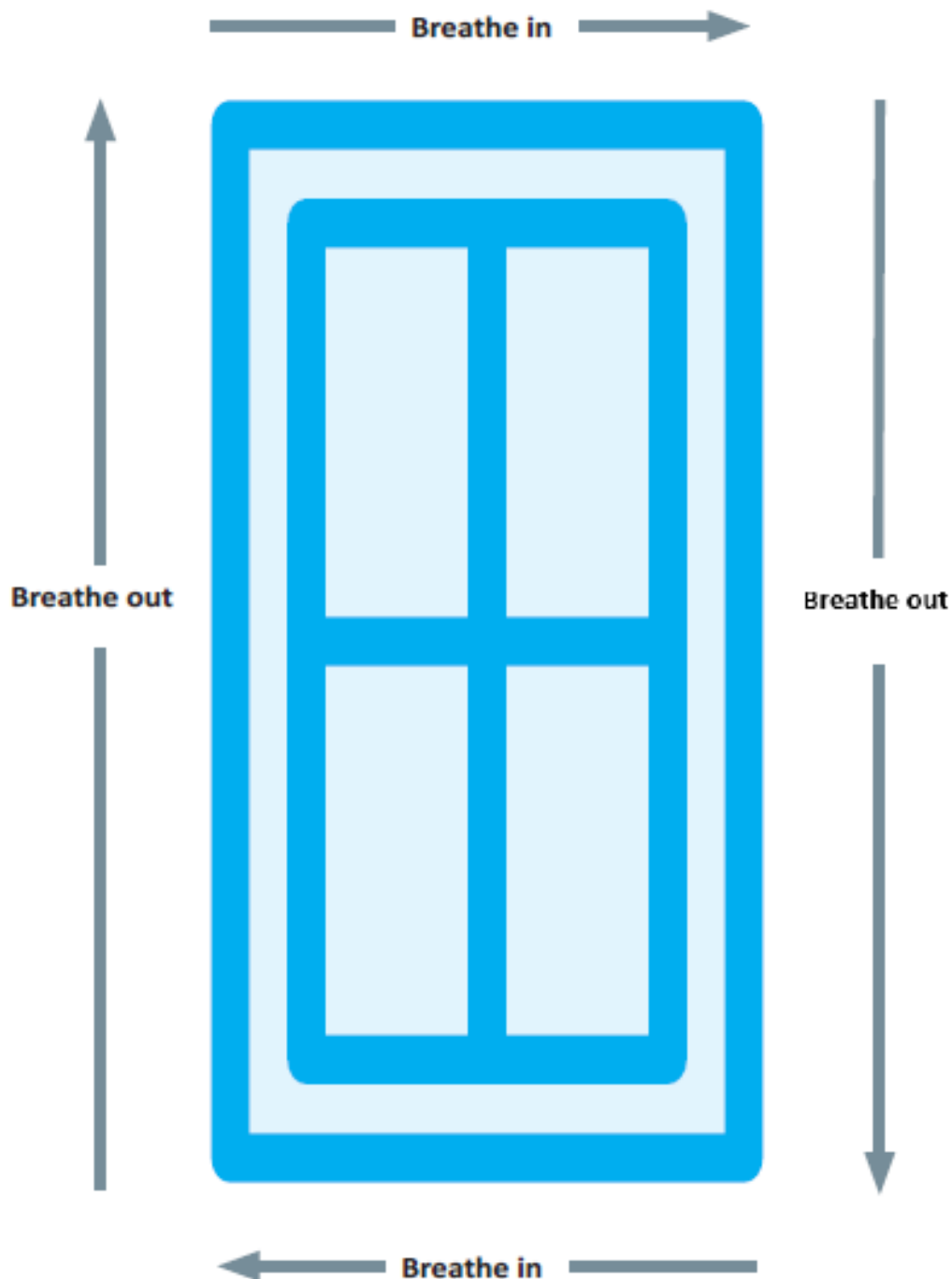
**Additional oxygen will not make you feel less breathless!**

## Breathe a rectangle

Find a comfortable position.

Look for a rectangle shape in the room e.g. a window, door or TV screen.

Move around the sides of the rectangle with your eyes, breathing in on the short sides and out on the long sides.



# Managing your cough

A dry cough is one of the most commonly reported symptoms for COVID-19 however in some cases it may be productive of phlegm.

## Strategies to manage a dry cough

- Stay well hydrated
- Sipping a drink – take small sips, one after the other, avoid taking large sips
- Steam inhalation – pour hot water into a bowl and put your head over the bowl. If comfortable, cover your head and bowl with a towel
- Drink warm honey and lemon or another warm drink, this can help to soothe the throat
- If you do not have a drink in hand, but need to cough, try swallowing repeatedly. This can work in a similar way to sipping water
- You can take an over-the-counter cough suppressant (Dextromethorphan containing product). In some cases your provider may call in prescription cough medication to help manage symptoms.

## Strategies to manage a productive cough

- Keep well hydrated
- Steam inhalation
- Try lying on either side, as flat as you can. This can help drain the phlegm
- Try moving around; this will help to move the phlegm so that you can cough it out

### Nebulized medications:

Use your nebulizer machine in a room away from other people. Try to keep the door shut for at least 3 hours after use. If possible, use outside on a porch or patio.

**This will prevent spread of COVID-19!**

The next page explains some exercises to help you clear your chest



# Exercises to help clear your chest

Following COVID-19 you may find that you have a productive cough and mucus on your chest.

These exercises and positions can help you clear your chest. These may be recommended by your provider, physical or respiratory therapist following COVID-19.

**Active Cycle of Breathing Technique (ACBT)** exercise consists of three breathing exercises that together help to clear the mucus off your chest.

## 1. Breathing control

- Gentle, relaxed breathing with your shoulders relaxed

## 2. Deep breaths

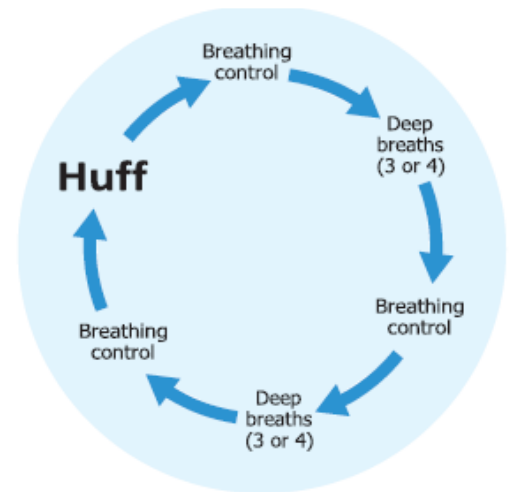
- Gently breath out without forcing it
- Repeat 3-4 times only (too many can make you feel dizzy)

## 3. Forced expiration techniques (Huff)

- Take a medium sized breath in
- Breath out forcefully for a short time
- Keep your mouth open and use your stomach and chest muscles
- Think 'huffing' a mirror to polish it
- Repeat 1-2 times
- Always finish on a cough or huff
- Stop when your huff is dry on two consecutive cycles

## How often and how long?

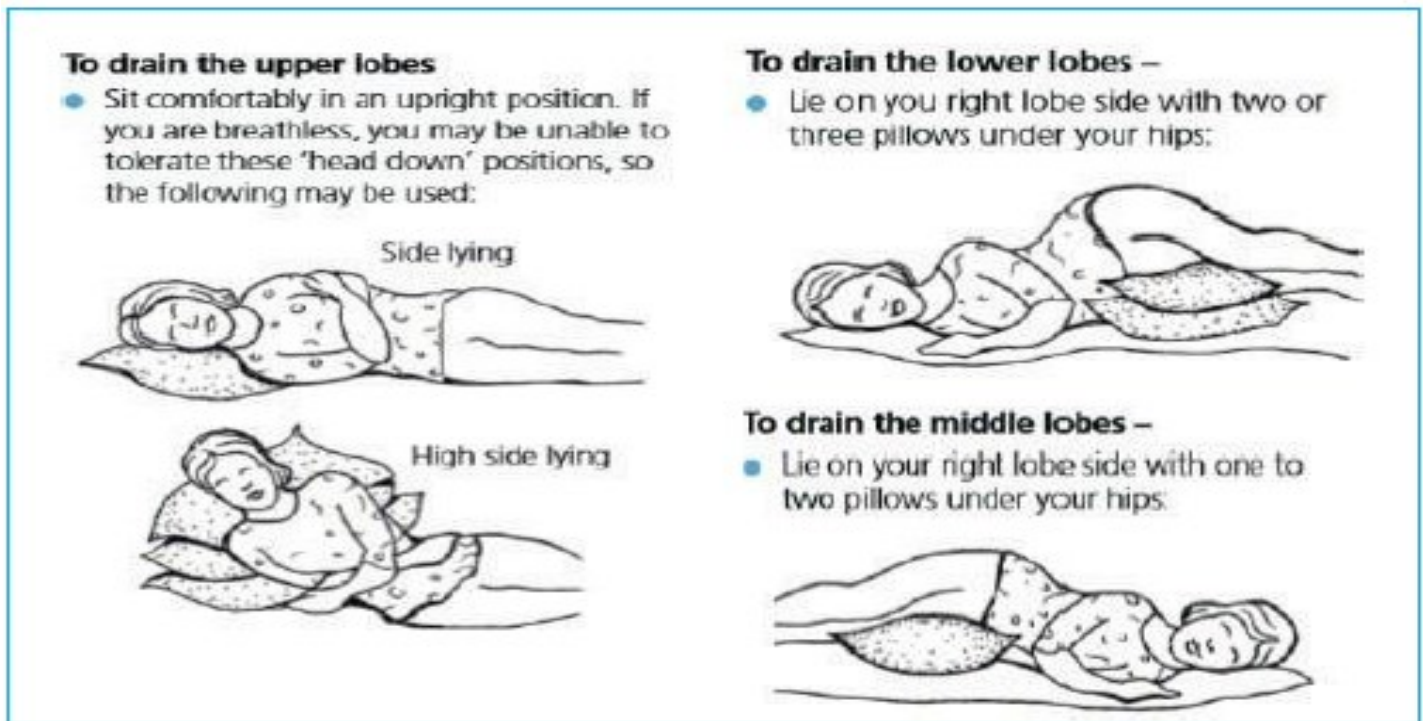
- Continue to do until you feel your chest is clearer
- Clear as much mucus as you can without becoming exhausted
- Perform for at least 10 minutes, but no longer than 30 minutes
- If productive 2-3 times per day



# Positions to help keep your chest clear

Use the following positions, along with ACBT to help clear your chest. However:

- don't use immediately before or after a meal
- stop if you have any side effects
- chose the position below that you feel would best drain your lungs, you can do this
- in discussion with a health care professional.



**Do not do this if you have:**

- Nausea
- Acid Reflux
- Become significantly breathless
- Have blood in your phlegm
- Have a recent chest, spine or rib injury
- Feel wheezy

**If you have any of the above, please speak with a health care professional before doing this.**

# Fatigue management

You will likely find that your **energy levels fluctuate** from day to day.

Walking around your home might be difficult, including managing the stairs, accessing toileting facilities and managing your daily routine.

This may result in you needing to adapt the activities that you do to enable you to conserve your energy. **If you find your activities of daily living difficult, you may benefit from an assessment from a home health agency. Contact your primary care provider for more information.**

**While you recover, you may need:**

- to consider a different set up such as single level living either downstairs or upstairs while you recover
- special equipment to make things easier.

## Understanding your energy levels



- **Imagine you had 10 bags of beans to fuel your day.**



- **When you are feeling well, it may feel like getting up from bed uses up half a bag of beans.**



- **Whilst you are recovering, this may now feel like it uses up 4 bags of beans meaning you only have 6 bags left to use for the rest of the day.**

With this analogy in mind it may be useful to keep a note of how tiring different activities are for you in order to help you understand the pattern of your fatigue and enable you to manage and adapt to this better.

# Conserving your energy using the ‘four Ps’

## Planning

**Planning includes organizing daily routines to allow completion of essential activities when you have the most energy.**

E.g. many find it more helpful to perform strenuous tasks such as dressing early in the day when strength and stamina are often at their peak.

It is important to think about the task prior to performing the task and expending physical energy.

### **Consider the following:**

- Think about the steps that need to be completed and items required for the task.
- Prepare the required items ahead of time.
- Keep frequently used items in easily accessible places.
- Have duplicate items available to limit unnecessary trips between the bathroom, bedroom, or kitchen.
- Consider using a bag, basket, or rolling trolley to carry tools or supplies in one trip.
- Consider your weekly routine. It will be beneficial to schedule strenuous activities, such as going to the hairdresser, attending religious services, and shopping, evenly throughout the week instead of all in one day.

# Pacing

**Once activities are planned, pacing allows individuals to sustain an energy level until the task is completed.**

**Consider the following:**

- Allow plenty of time to complete activities and incorporate frequent rests.
- Perform tasks at a moderate rate and avoid rushing. Although a task may be completed in less time, rushing utilizes more energy and leaves less 'in the bank' for later activities.
- Allow plenty of time for rest and relaxation. Take a morning or afternoon nap prior to activities or outings to build up energy.
- Breathe easily and properly during activities. Using these techniques helps decrease shortness of breathe.
- Rethink activities with rest in mind. For example, sit instead of stand while folding clothes or preparing food. Instead of writing 25 holiday cards in one day consider writing five cards per day over five days.

# Prioritizing

**The third strategy is often the most challenging. When faced with limited energy reserves individuals must look critically at work, family, and social roles and keep only those roles that are necessary and pleasurable.**

**Consider the following:**

- Can a friend or family member assist with chores e.g. emptying the garbage, vacuuming so you have more energy for necessary and pleasurable tasks?
- Eliminate unnecessary tasks, chores or steps of an activity. Look for shortcuts and loosen the rules.
- Be flexible in daily routines enables you to enjoy activities you would like otherwise miss because of fatigue.

# Positioning

**Positioning is extremely effective, but not often considered when addressing energy conservation. Current methods of performing tasks may be using more energy than required.**

**Consider the following:**

- Storing items at a convenient height to avoid excessive and prolonged stooping and stretching.
- Make sure all work surfaces are at the correct height. If a counter is too short, slouching and bending can occur which results in more energy expenditure.
- Use long-handled devices such as reachers or telescope cleaning tools to avoid unnecessary bending and reaching.
- Facilitate bathing - use a shower seat and a hand-held shower head.

# The emotional impact

**The experience of having COVID-19 can be very frightening. It is very understandable that the experience can have an emotional impact.**

Whether you have had mild or more severe symptoms, these are some common difficulties that you may be having:

- Feeling anxious when breathless
- Worries about health or about family or friends getting ill
- Feeling low in mood
- Poor sleep

**If you were treated in hospital, you may also experience:**

- unpleasant images from your stay, that might seem to come 'out of the blue'
- nightmares
- feelings of panic with any reminders of hospital.

## What can help?

- Avoid watching too much news or social media if it is making you feel anxious, try limiting yourself to looking at the news once a day
- Speak to family and friends
- Try to do activities that you find enjoyable and relaxing
- Don't be too hard on yourself if there are some things that you are finding harder to do, remind yourself that recovery takes time
- Focus on what is in your control like eating well
- If you continue to feel overwhelmed by your symptoms, speak to your GP or see



# Relaxation techniques

**Relaxation is an important part of energy conservation.**

It can also help you to control your anxiety, improve the quality of your life and reduce pain and discomfort. Below are two relaxation techniques you can use to manage anxiety and help you relax.

## **Grounding technique for when you feel anxious**

Take a few slow breaths and ask yourself:

- What are five things I can see?
- What are four things I can feel?
- What are three things I can hear?
- What are two things that I can smell?
- What is one thing I can taste?

Think of these answers to yourself slowly, one sense at a time spending at least 10 seconds focusing on each sense.

## **Picture yourself somewhere calm**

Think of somewhere relaxing and peaceful. It could be a memory of somewhere you've been or a made up place.

**Close your eyes, and think about the details of this place. What does it look like:**

- What colors and shapes can you see?
- Can you hear any sounds?
- Is it warm or cool?
- What does the ground feel like?

Spend some time imagining each of these.

# Managing your diet post COVID-19

You may find your taste changes during and for a period of time following COVID-19. Your appetite may also not be as good as usual. However it is important to eat well and remain well hydrated to help you recover.

## What makes food and drink important?

When our body is fighting an infection it needs more **energy** and more **fluids** to help; so we need to eat and drink more than we usually would if we were well.

When our body is recovering from an infection it needs more building blocks (from **protein** foods) for healthy muscles and to improve your strength. Vitamins and minerals are also important to support your immune system and ensure you get a balanced diet.

If you are having trouble eating regular meals aim to eat smaller more frequent meals/snacks throughout the day. Continue to increase fluids as tolerated.

Aim to drink at least 8( 8oz) cups of water each day. Water is the best choice, but you can also consume other drinks, fruits and vegetables that contain water, for example lemon juice (diluted in water and unsweetened), tea and coffee. But be careful not to consume too much caffeine, and work to limit sweetened fruit juices and sodas.

## What can you do to make the most of your food and drink?

Continuing to choose foods higher in protein together with gradually getting back to normal activity levels will help to rebuild your strength.

Aim to have **3** palm size items from the protein group daily – try and include at each meal.

Some examples of Protein include:

Fish, chicken, turkey, lean beef, pork, soy/tofu, eggs, beans, nut butters/nuts and dairy products.

Aim to have **3** servings of dairy per day. Dairy is an excellent source of calcium, Vitamin D, and protein. A serving of dairy = 1 cup low fat milk, 1/2 cup cottage cheese, 1 oz cheese cube, 1 small (6oz) container low fat yogurt.

**\*If you have a poor appetite or want to gain weight choose the full fat and full sugar versions.**

## **How can you get enough vitamins and minerals?**

Aim to have 5 handfuls of fruit and vegetables each day\*

Fresh, frozen and canned varieties all count.

If you have a poor appetite / need to gain weight then serve fruit with full fat yogurt, custard or cream and vegetables with butter or grated cheese to increase your energy intake.

Some examples of fruits and vegetables include:

Berries, oranges, apples, bananas, and grapes. Broccoli, carrots, spinach, squash, cabbage, green beans to name a few.

**\*If it is hard for you to consume fruits/vegetables you may want to consider a daily multi-vitamin & mineral supplement; your pharmacist can advise you.**

Spend some time outdoors each day if you can and consider taking a Vitamin D supplement.

Some examples of vitamin D containing foods include:

Dairy foods, oily fish like salmon or sardines, red meat, egg yolks, and breakfast cereals that are fortified.

**If you are struggling to eat well or are losing weight / need more help and support, ask your primary care provider to refer you to your local registered dietitian.**

**Useful nutrition information online:**

1. <http://www.emro.who.int/nutrition/nutrition-infocus/nutrition-advice-for-adults-during-the-covid-19-outbreak.html#:~:text=Daily%2C%20eat%3A%202%20cups%20of,in%20sugar%2C%20fat%20or%20salt.>
2. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/eating-during-covid-19-improve-your-mood-and-lower-stress-2020040719409>
3. <https://www.eatright.org/coronavirus>

**Community resources:**

Local Food Banks (FISH– 937-548-2000 or Grace Resurrection– 937– 548– 2598)

WIC Program– 937– 547-1776

Lacie Grosch, Registered Dietitian– Family Health– 937-547-2319

# Physical activity advice following COVID-19

Spending time in hospital or being ill at home with COVID-19 can result in a significant reduction in muscle strength, particularly in your legs.

This can be for a number of reasons, but mainly due to inactivity.

**It's not harmful to get out of breath when doing physical activity, this is a normal response.**

However if you are too breathless to speak, slow down until your breathing improves. Try not to get so breathless that you have to stop immediately, remember to pace your activities.

You might have been given some exercises to do in hospital or in the community by a respiratory therapist. Make sure you keep doing these regularly.

If you are unsure about these, or you would like input from a respiratory therapist, your primary care provider may be able refer you to the appropriate service.

**Or if you are concerned that your mobility has significant deteriorating please contact your primary care physician for a referral to physical therapy.**

For a free exercise App which creates an individualized 12-week exercise plan based on the health information you enter.

## Social life and hobbies

When you've been seriously ill, you may feel differently about things and you may not want to do things you used to enjoy. You may:

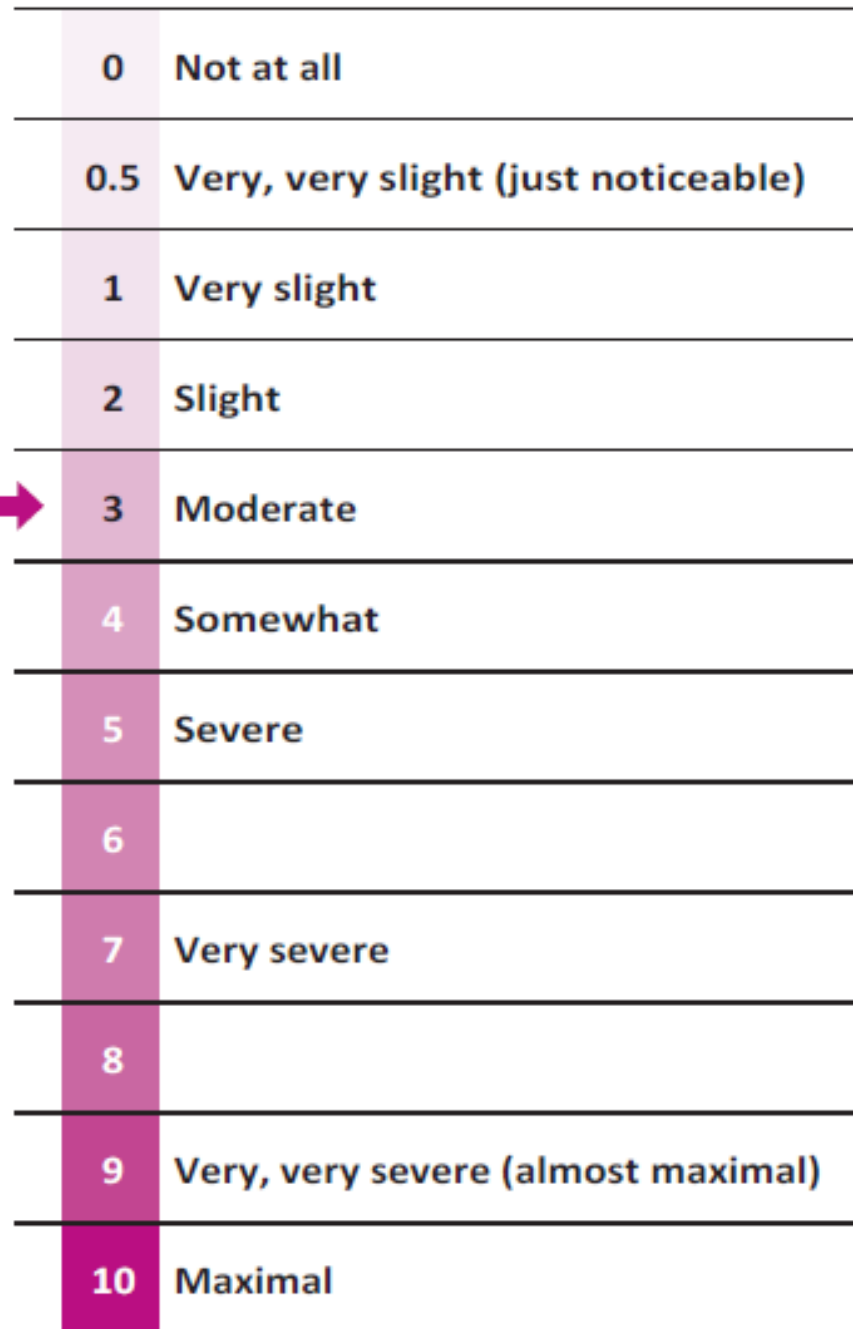
- not feel like seeing lots of people at once
- find it difficult to concentrate
- find it hard to follow a TV program.

**Your concentration will get better and your memory will usually improve.**

# Physical activity advice - how hard should it be?

## Breathlessness scale

When you are  
doing physical  
activity, it is ok to  
feel moderately  
breathless



0	Not at all
0.5	Very, very slight (just noticeable)
1	Very slight
2	Slight
3	Moderate
4	Somewhat
5	Severe
6	
7	Very severe
8	
9	Very, very severe (almost maximal)
10	Maximal

# Smoking and COVID-19

- Smoking tobacco products increase your risk of infection due to the harm caused to your immune system and lungs.
- Smoking is linked with poorer outcomes in COVID-19.
- Its never too late to stop.
- By stopping you can see benefits within 24 hours.

Quitting tobacco use is one of the single best things you can do for your health.  
Make a small goal for something you'd like to change and get started!

Most people will need 5-6 quit attempts before they are successful so keep working towards your goals!



If you need help with making or keeping a goal call your provider or stop by Family Health's smoking cessation clinic the **1st and 3rd Tuesdays** of the month.

You can also call the tobacco quit line. When you call **1-800-QUIT-NOW**, you can speak confidentially with a highly trained quit coach.

## What to do if my symptoms do not improve

The length of time that it takes to recover from COVID-19 varies from person to person, for some it will be days, others weeks or months.

The more severe your symptoms, the longer it might take for you to return to what is normal for you.

If however after 6-8 weeks, you are still experiencing symptoms, please contact your primary care provider for further review.

## Getting psychological support

Feeling anxious or low in mood is very normal when recovering from COVID-19. You can discuss this with your family and friends or primary care provider if you feel able too.

However, if it feels like it is going on too long or you are finding it hard to cope, you may need help:

If you or someone else is in immediate risk of serious harm or injury, you should call the emergency services by **dialing 911**.

If you are in crisis, your situation is very serious and you need help immediately or in life threatening situations, go to the local emergency department which is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Alternatively

**This help is also available for your family or caregivers, who may experience anxiety, depression or acute stress reactions following your diagnosis and recovery of COVID-19.**

# COPING WITH STRESS DURING COVID-19

## Take Care of Your Mental Health



You may experience increased stress during this pandemic-fear and anxiety can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions. With holidays approaching and COVID-19 numbers soaring, it is important that you seek support if you are feeling overwhelmed and stressed.

### Tri County Board opens Warmline for the Holidays

According to Terri Becker, Executive Director of the Tri-County Board, the Warmline is a no-charge telephone service managed by trained professionals who can help people learn coping skills and stress management practices during the pandemic. It is also a resource to refer to professional counselors as needed.

Warmline hotline is available Mondays 9AM-12PM, Tuesdays 1PM-4PM, and Thursdays 4PM-7PM. If you call the Warmline outside of established hours please leave voicemail with callback number. The Warmline will not be staffed on holidays.

Warmline phone number is 937-423-6320

If in crisis please call 24/7 Hotline 1-800-351-7347

Mental health is an important part of overall health and wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel, and act. Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row, or call the Warmline number above to speak to a trained operator.

### Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

- Know where and how to get treatment- use call lines above for support services and resources.
- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including those on social media.
- Take care of your body. Maintain a healthy lifestyle as best as you can with proper diet and regular physical activity. Avoid excessive alcohol and drug use.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk to people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- Connect with your community or faith based organizations. While social distancing measures are in place consider connecting online, through social media, or by phone or mail.

Resources provided by the Tri-County Board, Family Health Services, and the CDC