

Life after Coronavirus (Covid-19) for patients who were cared for on a general ward

You may feel much better now or you may feel like you are still recovering. Both are perfectly normal.

This leaflet provides simple information about dealing with the common problems some people have after an illness like Coronavirus (Covid-19). Not everyone will have these problems, everyone is different. Please speak to your GP if you have any worries or concerns.

There is a separate leaflet for patients cared for in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) or High Dependency Unit (HDU). If you need a copy of this publication, please visit the Trust website or ask the ward staff for a copy.

I feel tired and weak

Tiredness and weakness are normal when you are getting better. Sometimes this tiredness is called fatigue. This term is used to describe a complete lack of energy and motivation. You may find that small things make you very tired and you may not feel as strong or as mobile as before.

Some things that may help if you are feeling weak or tired:

- **Rest.** When you are tired or fatigued you need to rest. Allow yourself to rest when you need to, as this will help your body recover.
- **Keep moving.** Physical activity will help you to get better. You can keep moving in lots of different ways, like walking in the house more, or standing during the adverts.

- **Small steps.** Little and often is a good rule to follow. It is important to build physical activity up slowly. You could set yourself small mini goals each day.
- **Be kind to yourself.** There is no fixed timescale for getting less tired. Everyone is different.
- **Allow yourself to rest when you need to.** As well as moving more, rest will help your body get better.

It may take some time to fully get back to feeling as fit and well as you were before. If you are in work, it may be helpful to talk to your manager about how and when to go back to work.

Some people find that a 'phased return' (doing less hours than normal) or 'light duties' (doing less difficult or stressful tasks) can help people make a successful return to work.

I feel anxious and worried

It's normal to feel anxious and worried after being ill. Anxiety is the body's built-in safety system. Sometimes when we have been through something difficult we get anxious more often. Our anxiety levels will often get better with time.

Some symptoms of anxiety are like some of the things you may have noticed when you got ill. Common anxiety symptoms are:

- problems sleeping
- feeling shaky, dizzy or sweaty

- racing heart or fast breathing
- butterflies in your tummy, or tummy problems
- feeling clammy
- trouble concentrating or sitting still
- racing thoughts

Some things that may help if you are feeling anxious or worried:

- **Talk to someone you trust.** It can help to share what's on your mind with someone else, maybe a family member or a friend. You could also talk to a mental health professional.
- **Pause.** It can help to take a moment and stop. This can give your body time to calm down.
- **Grounding.** This is a good technique for when you are stressed. Practice noticing 5 things you can hear, see, taste, smell and touch.
- **Practice relaxation.** Spend time doing things that you find relaxing, like listening to music, watching a favourite TV show, or doing a hobby.

I have sleeping problems and nightmares

It is common to have sleeping problems after being ill, particularly if you have been to hospital. Sleeping problems usually get better with time. Your sleep will often get better when you get more active.

- You may need to take naps and go to bed early.
- Follow what your body needs.

It is also common to have nightmares and memories. It is the brain's way of trying to

make sense of what happened in hospital.

These problems are normal and common, but can feel very real and scary. You might be upset about things you saw or heard in hospital and this is perfectly understandable.

- Talking to someone you trust will help.
- If the dreams or difficult memories do not get better within 4-6 weeks, you may want to speak to your GP. There are many things they can suggest which may help.

I feel low in mood

Many people report feeling snappy, having mood swings, or feeling teary when they are getting better from an illness like Coronavirus (Covid-19). You have been through a lot. Life may also feel very different at the moment. Things that can help your mood:

- Develop a new routine for yourself, as you recover
- Set yourself small goals each day
- Do the things you can do now, that you enjoy
- Talk to people you trust about how you are feeling
- Write a diary about how you are feeling

If you do not feel your mood is improving, or if it is getting worse, speak to your GP.

My family are different with me

Your family have been through a lot too. They may have many different feelings at this time. They may have different feelings to you.

- It will help if you are able to make time to talk and listen to each other

- It may help if you can make time to do things together that you enjoy (over the phone or the internet if you cannot be with them in person).

Other things which you (or your family) might notice

There are a number of other ways in which you might not feel fully back to normal straight away.

You might notice you are more short of breath. This can be quite common when you are getting better, and building your strength up, or are feeling more anxious. However, if these problems carry on, or become more difficult, talk to your GP or another health professional.

Whilst recovering, you may notice that your memory or concentration is not quite so good. This is very common after an illness and should improve as you continue to recover. If these problems carry on, talk to your GP or another health professional.

At first, it may also be helpful to try the tips below:

- Write down appointments and other plans in a diary or calendar
- Put reminders in places you look frequently, e.g. kitchen cupboard, fridge or mirror
- Do things at the time of day when you have most energy
- Do one thing at a time

Acknowledgement

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References

The British Psychological Society, 'Meeting the psychological needs of people recovering from severe Coronavirus (Covid-19)':

www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Meeting%20the%20psychological%20needs%20of%20people%20recovering%20from%20severe%20coronavirus.pdf

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, 'Life after Discharge from Intensive Care':

www.ouh.nhs.uk/patient-guide/leaflets/files/13972Plife.pdf

Support Details

For medical help and advice

NHS 111

- 111
- www.nhs.uk

Emergency and life-threatening situations

- 999
- Attend your nearest Accident and Emergency Department

Your GP

- Contact as usual

Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust website

<https://www.chesterfieldroyal.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/coronavirus>

For help with your mental health

Derbyshire

Tips on looking after your emotional health:

Derbyshire County Council ‘Coronavirus pages’

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/health-and-wellbeing/health-protection/disease-control/coronavirus/coronavirus-covid-19.aspx>

Derbyshire Mental Health Support line

- 0800 028 0077
(24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- <https://www.derbyshirehealthcareft.nhs.uk/getting-help/coronavirus-covid-19/mental-health-support-line>

Joined up Care Derbyshire

www.joinedupcarederbyshire.co.uk/covid-19-information-and-advice

Additional help and support

Derbyshire

‘Call Derbyshire’ service:

- 01629 533190

Derbyshire County Council (DCC)

- www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/health-and-wellbeing/health-protection/disease-control/coronavirus/coronavirus-covid-19.aspx

DCC Community Response Unit

- 01629 535091 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 9am-1pm)

National

NHS Every Mind Matters:

- www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

Samaritans

- 116 123 (24-hour free support service)
- www.samaritans.org

Northumberland, Tyne & Wear NHS Trust leaflets:

- www.ntw.nhs.uk

MOODJUICE self-help resources:

- www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk



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