

Tips for coping with isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic



Managing your mental health

For support with looking after your mental health at this difficult time of social distancing and isolation, or for bereavement support, our Family Support service and Supporting Hands service are still able to provide companionship, listening support and counselling over the telephone. Please call 01442 890444 to speak to someone about either service.

We also offer an on-line bereavement counselling service "Grief Chat" via our website renniegrove.org/griefchat

For further information, advice and support please also see the following websites and helpline numbers:

Practical help

- HertsHelp: 0300 123 4044 for anyone living in Hertfordshire
- communities1st.org.uk for people living in the St Albans and Hertsmere districts
- directory.buckinghamshire.gov.uk for people living in Buckinghamshire
- buckscc.gov.uk/services.business-and-benefits/apply-for-local-emergency-support for people living in Buckinghamshire
- Carers UK: 0800 028 8327 a helpline for carers who are struggling to get the supplies and support they need. See also their website: carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/looking-after-your-health/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-further-support

Support around social isolation

- campaigntoendloneliness.org/blog/coronavirus-and-social-isolation/
- Age UK: 0800 169 65 65 ageuk.org.uk
- Silver Line: 0800 470 80 90 for older people
- samaritans.org 116 123 for anyone, anytime.

Support around grief and bereavement

- [cruse.org.uk](https://www.cruse.org.uk) leading national charity on bereavement through any circumstances. Website contains plenty of useful information and advice about coping with grief in this time of the coronavirus pandemic.
- childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-children

Tips on managing your mental health

- Talk to someone about your worries or concerns
- Exercise* regularly - exercise is well known to release ‘feel good’ hormones that will help you feel more positive, will aid digestion and help you sleep better. If you are restricted on how much you can exercise, even a little can help (please see attached chair exercises)
- Eat and Drink sensibly - Try to eat a varied diet. Eat at least three meals each day and drink plenty of water. Try to limit how many high-caffeine or sugary drinks you have and avoid too much alcohol
- Keep in touch - phone, video call, write letters
- Do something you enjoy - reading, watching a favourite TV programme, paint a picture, play a game

*If you have symptoms of COVID-19, please exercise indoors, or outside if you have your own garden.

Alongside exercise you may find the following practical resources helpful for anxiety or depression (eg audio guides for meditations and visualisations):

- [nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression)
- [mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing)
- [pennybrohn.org.uk/resources](https://www.pennybrohn.org.uk/resources) for people living with cancer

This website may be useful for specific challenges arising as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak:

- [mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak)

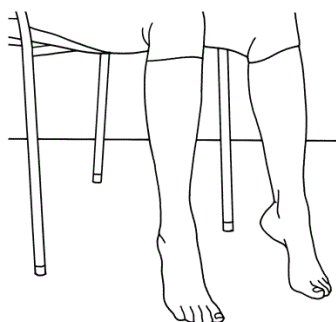
Chair based exercise - examples

As with all exercise you need to moderate the repetitions to suit your exercise ability. Ideally you want to do these, or a selection of these exercises gently 2 - 3 times per day.

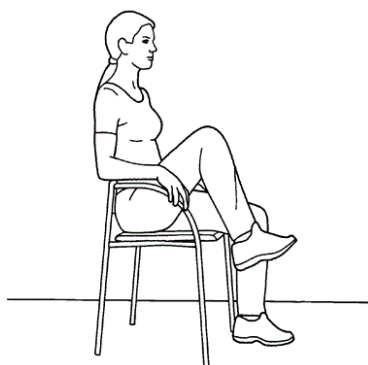
If you are not sure, often a good way to start is to do each exercise slowly for 30 seconds. If and when this becomes easier you can increase by no more than 5-10 seconds every 3-5 days.



In a seated position - slowly straighten your knee. Once the knee is straight, you can pull up your toes. You may feel a stretch at the back of your leg. Slowly return your foot to the floor and repeat with the other leg.



In a seated position - push up on to your toes, then return the heel to the floor. If you are able then pull toes up, leaving the heel on the floor. You may feel a stretch in your calf. Repeat on both sides.



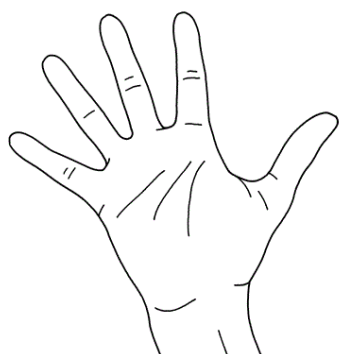
In a seated position - lift one knee and then the other, as if you are marching whilst sitting.



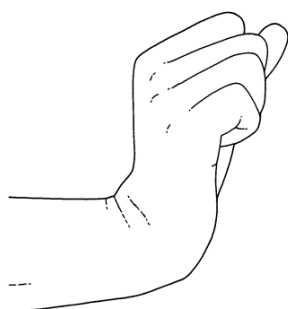
In a seated position, support your elbow with the opposite hand. Slowly bend and straighten your elbow. You can use a small weight, such as a small water bottle, if you wish. Repeat on the other side.



Roll your shoulders forwards and then backwards.



Spread your fingers wide apart and then make a fist. Repeat. Repeat on both sides.



Make a fist with your hand. Bend at the wrist up and down. It can help to hold the wrist still using the opposite hand. Repeat on both sides.

Managing breathlessness

Breathlessness:

Many conditions cause breathlessness, and this can be frightening, even if mild. This can be worsened by fears or anxiety relating to COVID-19. If you feel breathless the following techniques may help.

Breathing control

The aim of breathing control is to move from fast breathing from the upper part of your chest to slower 'tummy' breathing.

- Try to get into a comfortable position, or a position of ease, so that your shoulders can relax. When you are breathless often you bring your shoulder upwards towards your ears.
- If you can, breathe in through your nose down into your tummy. This helps moisten and warm the air before it reaches your lungs.
- When you breathe out you might find pursing your lips (as if blowing out a candle) as you breathe out may help. This helps keep the airways open. Do not force your lungs to empty.
- Sometimes it is helpful to place your hand on your tummy and concentrate of the rise and fall as you breathe in and out.

Try to make your breath out twice as long as the breath in. This helps you empty your lungs properly to make room for the next breath in.

Positions of ease

Some positions can ease your breathlessness, by allowing the muscles around the lungs to relax and your diaphragm (breathing muscle) to work more effectively.



Make sure you are fully over on your side. Resting your upper arm on a pillow may also help.



Relax down onto the pillows as much as possible. Having your legs apart may also help.

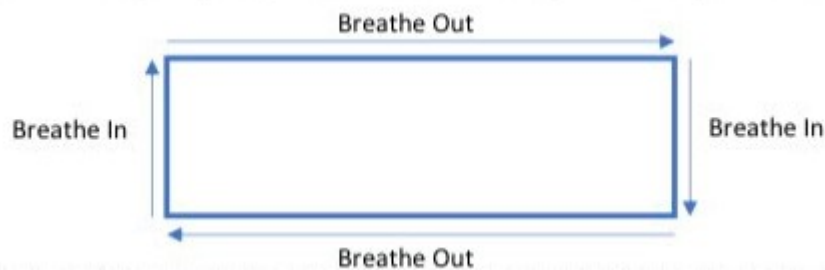


Experiment with your arm position, find what is comfortable with you. When sitting, sit upright, have your legs uncrossed and keep your head up. Leaning forward will also help.



Breathing the rectangle

Often it can be useful to 'breathe the rectangle'. This is where you breathe in for the vertical and out through the horizontal:



You could use a window or a TV screen as your rectangle.

Cooling the face

You can try using a **cool damp flannel** around your cheeks, nose and mouth area.

Cooling your face can help you feel less breathless.

Managing fatigue/activity

- **Prioritising** - what **needs** to be done, what can wait, what can someone else do for you
- **Planning** of activities - consider spreading tasks over the day or week
- **Pacing** (bite-sized chunks): Can the task be broken down into smaller jobs and completed over the day
- **Positioning** (posture and heights) - can items you use frequently be placed at a height to prevent extra bending or lifting?

Further information on managing your breathlessness can be found here:

kcl.ac.uk/cicelysaunders/research/symptom/breathlessness

blf.org.uk/support-for-you/breathlessness/how-to-manage-breathlessness

lifeofbreath.org/category/resources

Accurate and up to date information on COVID-19 can be found at:

[gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance)

If you are not able to manage your symptoms - please contact 111 or your GP immediately, or if you are a Rennie Grove Hospice at Home patient - please contact your team on the number you have been given.