

# Covid-19 and self care

## Boosting your mood

This fact sheet helps you to know what you can do to maintain and improve your health and wellbeing during this challenging time.

There's a lot you can do.

This fact sheet has been developed by adapting materials contained in Expert Self Care's 'Coronavirus Support' App. You can access and download the full app here: <https://www.expertselfcare.com/health-apps/coronavirus-support-app-uk/>

### Useful facts

- ◆ Be gentle with yourself and those around you. Nothing is 'normal' right now because the coronavirus crisis has an impact on all areas of our lives. Don't expect to feel okay all the time or to be perfect at everything. You are doing the best you can.

### What can I do to self care and help myself?

- ◆ **Check your employment rights:** During this time of change and uncertainty, you may be worried about work and money. This can have a big effect on your mental health. If you have not already, you might want to talk with your employer. Knowing the details about what the coronavirus outbreak means for you can reduce worry and help you feel more in control. To find out about government support for businesses and self employed people and to understand your sick pay and benefits rights see the links in the section at the end of this fact sheet.
- ◆ **Plan practical things:** Structure and plan your day. Getting into a new routine can help you feel better and more in control.
- ◆ **Stay connected with others:** Stay in touch with family, friends and work colleagues through phone or video calls and social media.
- ◆ **Talk about your worries:** Speak with others about how you are feeling. It's a difficult time for everyone, and sharing our feelings and worries can help others too. If you find this hard, check out the sources for additional information at the end of this fact sheet. You will find useful pointers to assist you.
- ◆ **Look after your body:** Look after your physical health by eating healthily, drinking enough water, and moving your body. Move your body regularly and choose activities that you enjoy and that suit your level of fitness and mobility, within the recommended restrictions; cycle, run or go for a brisk walk.
- ◆ **Stay on top of difficult feelings:** Many people feel anxious and worried as a result of this pandemic. There are a number of steps that you can take to help reduce feelings of worry, stress and anxiety.
- ◆ **Do not stay glued to the news:** Limit the time you spend watching or reading the news (perhaps to once a day) so you're not constantly exposed to upsetting stories. Don't have the radio on all the time if the regular news bulletins upset you.
- ◆ **Carry on doing the things you enjoy:** Keep up with the things you enjoy. If you can't do your usual fun activities because you're staying at home, see if you can adapt them, or try something new.
- ◆ **Take time to relax:** This can help with difficult emotions and worries, and improve wellbeing.
- ◆ **Get a good sleep:** New routines and situations can cause sleep problems, and sleep is important for wellbeing. Avoid screens as well as coffee, tea, energy drinks and alcohol before bedtime. Create an environment that promotes sleep. Keep your bedroom dark, quiet and tidy at night. Temperatures between 18C and 24C tend to promote good sleep. Remove electronic gadgets and use an alarm clock instead of your smartphone. Apps can help, too – check out the 'Sleep' section in the NHS app library (see the link in the section at the end of this fact sheet).

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The above section has been aligned to NHS 'Every Mind Matters – Mental wellbeing while staying at home'. More information is available on the NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/>

## What can I do to self care and help myself? Continued

- ◆ **Take notice:** Be interested and take a fresh look at the world around you. There can be beauty in the most unusual or mundane things. Try to enjoy the moment, whatever you're doing. Reflect on your experiences, so you become more aware of what matters to you.
- ◆ **Connect with nature:** Where possible, try to connect with the outdoors, even if it's simply by watching through a window, looking at trees or watching birds flying past.
- ◆ **Keep learning:** Consider taking up a new hobby such as learning to cook. Setting yourself goals can help you become more confident and happier without putting pressure on yourself. Focus on succeeding with small challenges, which can feel great while you work through them and when you see the result.
- ◆ **Give to others:** Supporting others can have a big impact on people's lives and improve your own wellbeing too. Consider joining community groups in line with current COVID-19 guidance to keep yourself and others safe. Try to be understanding and accepting of other people's worries, concerns and behaviours.
- ◆ **Get the facts:** Stay up-to-date by using only trusted sources, such as GOV.UK, and NHS websites. Fact-check information you get from other sources.
- ◆ **Alcohol:** Avoid drinking too much alcohol. In this stressful time, it may be tempting to drink more than usual. Not drinking, or drinking within recommended daily limits often improves sleep, helps you feel better in the mornings and prevents you feeling tired during the day (to learn more visit the NHS website – see the link below).

## When to seek medical help

**It is important to get help from a GP if you need it. You should see a GP if:**

- ◆ you've had a low mood for more than 2 weeks
- ◆ in the last month you have been bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless
- ◆ you're struggling to cope with a low mood
- ◆ in the last month you have been bothered by having little interest or pleasure in doing things
- ◆ things you're trying yourself are not helping
- ◆ you would prefer to get a referral from a GP

## Coronavirus symptoms

A high temperature, a new continuous cough or a loss of taste or smell can be symptoms of coronavirus. Visit NHS 111 Online for further details or ring 111 if you are unwell.

## Where can I find out more?

**For sources, additional information and advice on maintaining your mental and physical wellbeing, visit:**

**NHS website:** Top tips to improve your mental wellbeing. <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/top-tips-to-improve-your-mental-wellbeing/>

**NHS website:** 10 tips to help if you are worried about coronavirus. <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-anxiety-tips/>

**NHS website:** Five steps to mental wellbeing. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>

**Mind:** Coronavirus and your wellbeing. <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

**Mind:** Five ways to wellbeing. <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

**Physical Activity, Exercise and Immune Function.** <https://www.rcgp.org.uk/clinical-and-research/resources/toolkits/-/media/E6555D-F011C84C24877B95E80FE0A696.ashx>

**NHS Apps Library:** Apps and online tools to help you manage your health and wellbeing. <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/>

**NHS website:** The risks of drinking too much. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/the-risks-of-drinking-too-much/>

**NHS website:** Coronavirus (COVID-19). <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

**Citizens Advice website:** <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you/>