



Post COVID-19 Patient Information Booklet

Helping you to recover and manage your symptoms following COVID-19



Collaborating for happier communities

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What is Coronavirus (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
- loss of appetite/taste/smell
- fatigue
- muscle aches
- shortness of breath when moving around
- sputum production

Some people may require hospitalisation 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 paracetamol if you have a temperature
- rest
- get up and move about at regular intervals

If you need additional advice, visit the NHS 111 online service www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19

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

Please call 111 for more advice or for a medical emergency or dial 999 immediately.

How might I feel after having COVID-19?

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.

Symptoms include:

- Severe fatigue

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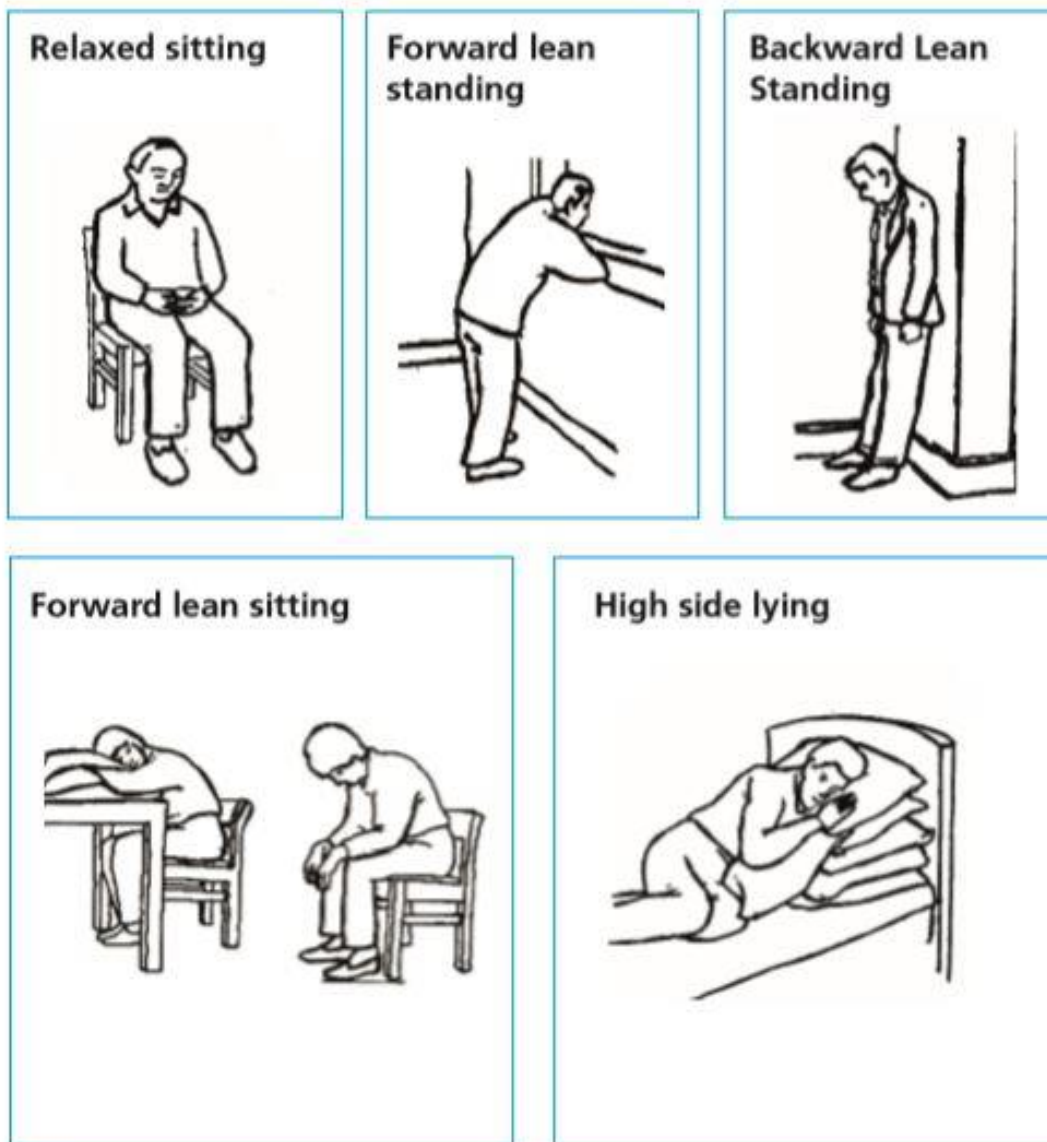
- Ongoing breathlessness
- Muscle weakness
- Post viral cough
- Difficulties with memory/confusion

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

Ways to help you manage your symptoms

Breathlessness

These positions can help ease your breathlessness and can be used when resting or when mobilising:



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Breathing Exercises

The following exercises can help you manage your breathlessness and reduce its impact on your everyday activities:

- 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

Keeping cool by opening a window and using a wet flannel to cool the area around your nose and mouth this can reduced the sensation of breathlessness.

Managing your Cough

- Stay hydrated - take small sips, one after the other, avoid taking large sips
- Drink warm honey and lemon or another warm drink, this can help to soothe the throat
- 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

Exercises to help clear your chest

Using an Active Cycle of Breathing Technique (ACBT) exercise consisting of three breathing exercises can help clear the mucus off your chest:

1. Breathing control

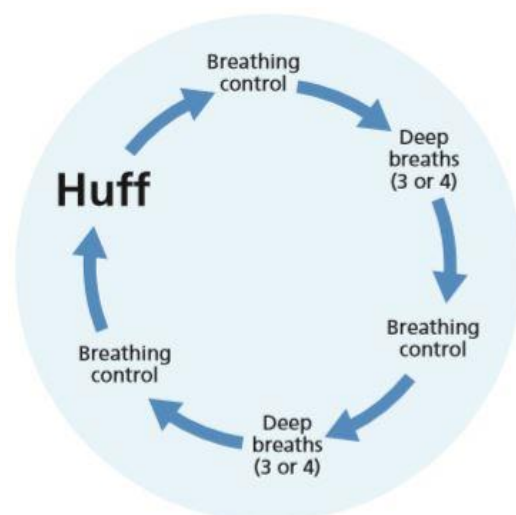
- Gentle, relaxed breathing with your shoulders relaxed

2. Deep breaths

- Breath in slowly and deeply
- 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



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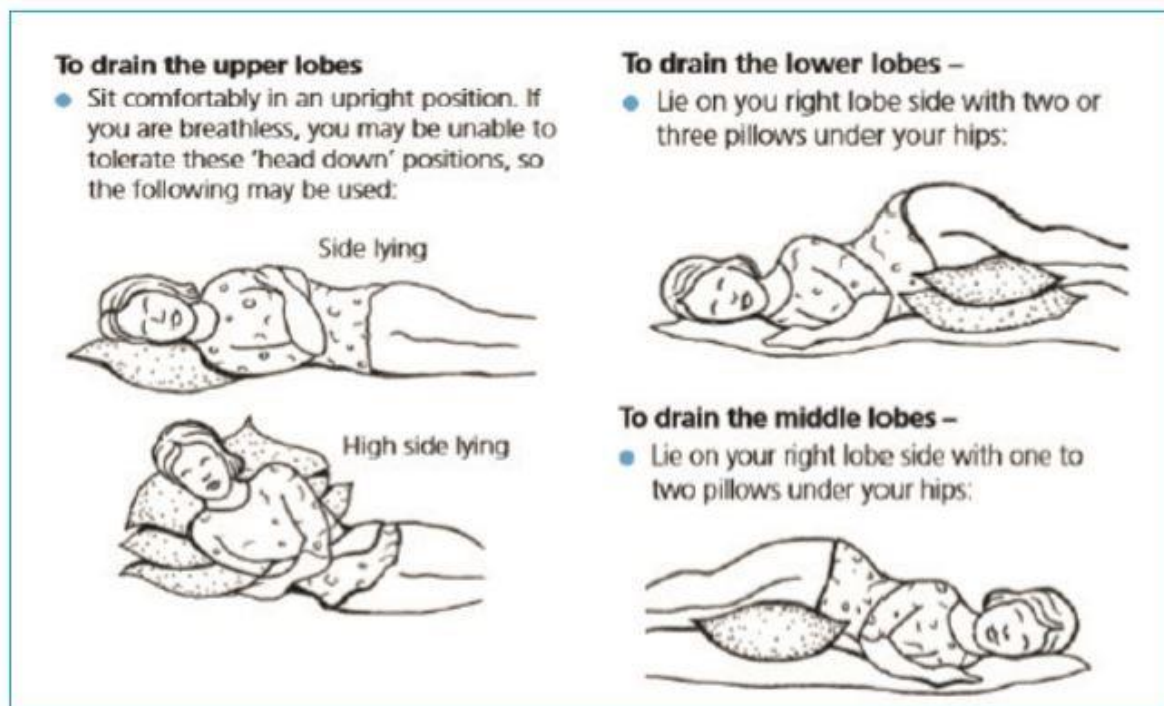
How often and how long?

- 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

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
- speak to a heath care professional before doing this if have
 - Nausea
 - Acid Reflux
 - Become significantly breathless
 - Have blood in your phlegm
 - Have a recent chest, spine or rib injury
 - Feel wheezy



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Fatigue Management

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

Use the '3 Ps' to help manage this:

1. Prioritise

- Think about what you want to achieve in your day
- Does it need to be done today?
- What can you ask a family member to help you with?

2. Plan

- Gather all the items you will require for the task
- Think about how you can break the task down in small sections
- Think about the time you are at your best to complete the activity
- Plan the activity on a day you have support around you

3. Pace

- Allow enough time
- Rest regularly
- Sit and rest where you can
- Use equipment to help

Emotional Support

The experience of having COVID-19 can be very frightening. It is very understandable that the experience may 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
- Money / housing / employment worries

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.

Alternatively you can call the Black Country Mental Health Support line on 0800 008 6516. The line is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



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Post COVID Support Services

Below are a range of local services and useful links that can offer advice and support should you need it:

Supporting your recovery after COVID-19

As you find yourself recovering from COVID-19 you may still be coming to terms with the impact the virus has had on both your body and mind. These changes should get better over time, some may take longer than others, but there are things you can do to help.

Visit the Your COVID Recovery website <https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/> to help you to understand what has happened and what you might expect as part of your recovery.

Walsall Community Living Directory provides an easy to search comprehensive directory of clubs, community, third sector and voluntary organisations, care providers, self-help groups and what's on listing of local events. Individuals can search information under the key headings including money matters, housing, health and well-being and education and employment.

You can access the website here: <https://www.wcld.co.uk>

Making Connections Walsall

Making Connections Walsall is a friendly service for people in Walsall that aims to address loneliness and social isolation and other issues you may be facing.

There are lots of groups, organisations and clubs in Walsall which can support the health and well-being of local people and Making Connections can help you identify not only activities, but projects and services available in your community to support you.

It is open to all Walsall residents of all ages.

Call **0121 380 6690** and you will be contacted by your local hub within 3 working days.

Citizens Advice Sandwell and Walsall

Citizens Advice Sandwell and Walsall provides free, confidential and impartial advice for the problems people in Sandwell and Walsall may have.

This includes general advice as well as debt, housing, benefits and work related advice and support.

Call **0300 330 9017** or visit <https://citizensadviceandwell-walsall.org/> for more information.

Test and Trace Support Services

Individuals who are informed by NHS test and trace on or after 28 September 2020 to self-isolate due to receiving a positive COVID-19 test – or have been identified by NHS test and trace as a 'close contact' of someone with a positive COVID-19 test may qualify for a support payment of £500 if they will lose money due to self-isolation.

For full details of the eligibility criteria or to make a claim visit:

https://go.walsall.gov.uk/residents_COVID_support or call **01922 654111**.



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Health, Hope and Happiness

If you are a whg customer you can access their new Health, Hope and Happiness service which is designed to support customers to improve their health and well-being.

To access the service or find out more call **07742 400609** or email Lisa.Sylvester@whgrp.co.uk

Walsall Talking Therapies Service

Our Walsall Talking Therapies Service supports people with depression and anxiety symptoms. We can help people aged 17 and over who are registered with a Walsall GP.

You can self-refer by calling **0800 953 0995** or visit www.blackcountryhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/talking-therapies-healthy-minds-services/walsall-talking-therapies to refer online or find out more about the service.

Black Country Mental Health Support

If you are experiencing increased distress or anxiety during these uncertain times, please don't suffer in silence, pick up the phone and speak to one of our specialist mental health professionals who will be able to support you.

Call the support phone line on **0800 008 6516** 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Stop Smoking Services

The Stop Smoking Service is delivered by a qualified stop smoking advisor over 4 weeks, provides support to help deal with the day to day challenges associated with stopping smoking for example cravings as well as medication support.

To contact Walsall stop smoking services call **01922 444044**.

For more information visit: <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/healthywalsall/LIVING-WELL/Walsall-Stop-Smoking-Services>

A&A Services

A&A Services West Midlands are a Walsall based registered charity here to help and support the elderly and vulnerable with a variety of services including food banks, befriending, cleaning and escorting to appointments or shopping trips for example.

For more information call **0330 043 3445** or visit www.aandacharity.org

You can get all the latest COVID Updates from Walsall Council by visiting https://go.walsall.gov.uk/covid-19_information

If you require this information in an alternative language or format please contact us on **01922 605947**.

The Walsall Together Partnership would like to acknowledge and thank NHS Homerton University Hospital NHS Trust for kindly allowing us to replicate and localise their Post COVID Patient Information Pack for the people of Walsall.