

Coronavirus and your wellbeing

You might be worried about coronavirus (also known as COVID-19) and how it could affect your life. This may include being asked to stay at home or avoid other people.

This might feel difficult or stressful. But there are lots of things you can try that could help your wellbeing.

This information is to help you cope if:

- you're feeling anxious or worried about coronavirus
- you're staying at home or avoiding public places as part of social distancing
- you have to self-isolate. This means you avoid contact with other people and follow strict hygiene rules.

And it covers:

- Plan for staying at home or indoors
- Take care of your mental health and wellbeing
- Checklist: are you ready to stay at home?

Plan for staying at home or indoors

If you're staying at home or indoors, you might find these ideas helpful:

Eat well and stay hydrated

- Find out about getting food delivered. For example, you might be able to order food online for home delivery. Or you could ask someone else to drop food off for you.
- Think about your diet. Your appetite might change if your routine changes, or if you're less active than you usually are. Eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can help your mood and energy levels. See our tips on food and mood for more information <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/food-and-mood/about-food-and-mood/>
- Drink water regularly. Drinking enough water is important for your mental and physical health. Changing your routine might affect when you drink or what fluids you drink. It could help to set an alarm or use an app to remind you.

Keep taking your medication

- You might be able to order repeat prescriptions by phone. Or you may be able to do this online using an app or website, if your doctor's surgery offers this. You could download the free NHS App and search for your surgery, although some surgeries aren't on the app yet.
- Ask your pharmacy about getting your medication delivered, or ask someone else to collect it for you. This will usually be possible, although if it's a controlled drug the pharmacy might ask for proof of identity. Make sure anyone collecting medication knows if they have to pay for it.
- Be careful about buying medication online. You should only buy from registered pharmacies.
- You can contact NHS 111 in England or NHS Direct Wales if you're worried about accessing medication.

Take care of your immediate environment

- If you are spending a lot of time at home, you may find it helpful to keep things clean and tidy, although this is different for different people.
- If you live with other people, keeping things tidy might feel more important if you're all at home together. But you might have different ideas about what counts as 'tidy' or how much it matters. It could help to decide together how you'll use different spaces. And you could discuss what each person needs to feel comfortable.
- Cleaning your house, doing laundry and washing yourself are important ways to help stop germs spreading, including when there are warnings about particular diseases. The NHS website has advice in English about how to stop germs from spreading <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/how-to-prevent-germs-from-spreading/> , and has advice in English about self-isolation <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>
- Your energy costs will probably rise if you're at home more than you usually would be. Think about how you can manage your energy use, or how to cover any higher bills. You could also ask your energy provider about any support they offer, for example if you can sign up to their priority services register.

If you have care needs, or provide care or support to someone else

- If you use care services, you should let your Local Authority and care provider know if you have to self-isolate.
- If you provide care, or support someone you don't live with, you should also let your Local Authority know if you have to self-isolate.
- Make it clear that any support is still needed. Tell them that alternative arrangements are required if any of the usual support can't continue. This may

include things like carers visiting, day centre sessions, or friends and family coming over to help.

- Your Local Authority should have policies for this situation and should tell you how they can meet your needs.

Take care of your mental health and wellbeing

If you've been asked to stay at home and avoid other people, it might feel more difficult than usual to take care of your mental health and wellbeing.

These are some ideas which may help:

Hand washing & anxiety

Some mental health problems can cause difficult feelings or behaviours to do with washing or hygiene. If you experience this, you might find it hard to hear advice about washing your hands.

If this is making you feel stressed or anxious, here are some things you could try:

- Don't keep re-reading the same advice if this is unhelpful for you.
- Let other people know you're struggling. For example, you could ask them not to remind you to wash your hands.
- Breathing exercises can help you cope and feel more in control. You can find a simple breathing exercise on the NHS website (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/ways-relieve-stress/>) Our pages on relaxation also have some exercises you can try, and other relaxation tips (<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/relaxation/relaxation-tips/>)
- Set limits, like washing your hands for the recommended 20 seconds.
- Plan something to do after washing your hands. This could help distract you and change your focus.

Connect with people

Keep in touch digitally

- Make plans to video chat with people or groups you'd normally see in person.
- You can also arrange phone calls or send instant messages or texts.
- If you're worried that you might run out of stuff to talk about, make a plan with someone to watch a show or read a book separately so that you can discuss it when you contact each other.
- Think of other ways to keep in contact with people if meeting in person is not possible. For example, you could check your phone numbers are up to date, or that you have current email addresses for friends you've not seen for a while.

Connect with others in similar situations

- If you're part of a group of people who are also self-isolating, you may be part of group communications to receive updates on your situation. This group could also act as an informal support network.
- You could join a peer support community. Mind runs an online peer support community called Elefriends, where you can share your experiences and hear from others. <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/support-community-elfriends/>
- If you're going online more than usual or seeking peer support on the internet, it's important to look after your online wellbeing. See our pages about online mental health for more information <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/online-mental-health/about-online-mental-health/>

If you're worried about loneliness

- Think about things you can do to connect with people. For example, putting extra pictures up of the people you care about might be a nice reminder of the people in your life.
- Listen to a chatty radio station or podcast if your home feels too quiet.

Decide on your routine

- Plan how you'll spend your time. It might help to write this down on paper and put it on the wall.
- Try to follow your ordinary routine as much as possible. Get up at the same time as normal, follow your usual morning routines, and go to bed at your usual time. Set alarms to remind you of your new schedule if that helps.
- If you aren't happy with your usual routine, this might be a chance to do things differently. For example, you could go to bed earlier, spend more time cooking or do other things you don't usually have time for.
- Think about how you'll spend time by yourself at home. For example, plan activities to do on different days or habits you want to start or keep up.

If you live with other people, it may help to do the following:

- Agree on a household routine. Try to give everyone you live with a say in this agreement.
- Try to respect each other's privacy and give each other space. For example, some people might want to discuss everything they're doing while others won't.

Try to keep active

Build physical activity into your daily routine, if possible. Most of us don't have exercise equipment like treadmills where we live, but there are still activities you can do. Exercising at home can be simple and there are options for most ages and abilities, such as:

- cleaning your home
- dancing to music
- going up and down stairs
- seated exercises - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/>
- online exercise workouts that you can follow
- sitting less – if you notice you've been sitting down for an hour, just getting up or changing position can help.

Get as much sunlight, fresh air and nature as you can

Spending time in green space or bringing nature into your everyday life can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. It can improve your mood, reduce feelings of stress or anger, and make you feel more relaxed.

It's possible to still get these positive effects from nature while staying indoors at home. You could try the following:

- Spend time with the windows open to let in fresh air.
- Have flowers or potted plants in your home.
- Use natural materials to decorate your living space, or use them in art projects. This could include leaves, flowers, feathers, tree bark or seeds.
- Arrange a comfortable space to sit, for example by a window where you can look out over a view of trees or the sky, or watch birds and other animals.
- Grow plants or flowers on windowsills. For example, you could buy seeds online or look for any community groups that give away or swap them.
- Look at photos of your favourite places in nature. Use them as the background on your mobile phone or computer screen, or print and put them up on your walls.
- Listen to natural sounds, like recordings or apps that play birdsong, ocean waves or rainfall. Get as much natural light as you can. Spend time in your garden if you have one, or open your front or back door and sit on the doorstep.

Plan for working or studying at home

If you are asked to stay at home and away from other people, it might be difficult to keep working. If you have children, you may also need to look after them if they are asked to stay away from school or college.

These ideas might help you plan for this:

For parents of children and young people in school or college:

- Think about being more lenient with your children's social media and mobile phone use during their time away from school. Children and young people who go to school will be used to being around other children for several hours a day. They might find it difficult to be removed from this, especially if they're also worried about their health.
- Find out from their school what homework and digital learning will be available if they need to stay at home, and what technology they might need. Remember to add time in for breaks and lunch.
- If their school has not supplied homework or digital learning, you could encourage your children to select books or podcasts they'd like to explore during their time away from school. You can also think about card games, board games and puzzles, and any other ways to stay active or be creative.
- For older teens, there are free online courses they could try out. For example, these could be from FutureLearn <https://www.futurelearn.com/> and BBC Bitesize <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize> Your local library might also have online activities or resources you can use.
- If you plan to work from home, think about how to balance this with caring for your children. Some employers may ask if there is another adult who can supervise your children while you're working.

For adults in work

- Talk to your employer about any policies they have for working from home, if this is possible for your job.
- Plan ahead for working from home if you can. Your employer may be able to help you set things up in advance, like any technology you might need.

Find ways to spend your time

- Try having a clear out. You could sort through your possessions and put them away tidily, or have a spring clean. You could set any old possessions aside to donate to a cause you care about, or use online selling sites to pass on things you don't want to keep. If you do sell anything online, you might want to delay your delivery dates until you can leave the house to send your parcels.
- You could also have a digital clear out. Delete any old files and apps you don't use, upgrade your software, update all your passwords or clear out your inboxes.
- Write letters or emails, or make phone calls with people you've been meaning to catch up with.
- Do any admin tasks that you haven't got around to, for example changing your energy provider.

Find ways to relax and be more creative

There are lots of different ways that you can relax, take notice of the present moment and use your creative side.

These include:

- arts and crafts, such as drawing, painting, collage, sewing, craft kits or upcycling
- DIY
- colouring
- mindfulness
- playing musical instruments, singing or listening to music
- writing
- yoga
- meditation.
- See our pages on relaxation and mindfulness for more information and ideas.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/relaxation/relaxation-tips/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/mindfulness/about-mindfulness/>

Keep your mind stimulated

- Keep your brain occupied and challenged. Set aside time in your routine for this. Read books, magazines and articles. Listen to podcasts, watch films and do puzzles.

- Some libraries have apps you can use to borrow eBooks, audiobooks or magazines from home for free, if you're a library member.
- FutureLearn <https://www.futurelearn.com/> and OpenLearn <https://www.open.ac.uk/about/open-educational-resources/openlearn> have free online courses you could try.
- There are lots of apps that can help you learn things, such as a foreign language or other new skills.

Take care with news and information

- Stay connected with current events, but be careful where you get news and health information from.
- For up-to-date advice, see the NHS coronavirus webpage <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> and gov.uk coronavirus webpages <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>
- If news stories make you feel anxious or confused, think about switching off or limiting what you look at for a while.
- Social media could help you stay in touch with people, but might also make you feel anxious including if people are sharing news stories or posting about their worries. Consider taking a break or limiting how you use social media. You might decide to view particular groups or pages but not scroll through timelines or newsfeeds.
- See our pages about online mental health for more information. <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/online-mental-health/about-online-mental-health/>

If you're feeling too anxious

- If you have panic attacks or flashbacks, it might help to plan a 'safe space' in your home that you'll go to. <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/panic-attacks/>
- You can also find ways to comfort yourself if you're feeling anxious. For example, there are games and puzzles you can use to distract yourself, and breathing exercises which may help. <https://www.mind.org.uk/need-urgent-help/how-can-i-distract-myself/games-and-puzzles/>
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/self-care-for-anxiety/>

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) has more information on how to cope if you're feeling anxious about coronavirus. <https://www.bacp.co.uk/news/news-from-bacp/2020/28-february-coronavirus-anxiety-how-to-cope-if-you-re-feeling-anxious-about-the-outbreak/>

If you're feeling claustrophobic or trapped

- Open the windows to let in fresh air. Or you could spend time sitting on your doorstep, or in the garden if you have one.
- Try looking at the sky out of the window or from your doorstep. This can help to give you a sense of space.
- Regularly change the rooms you spend time in.

Checklist: are you ready to stay at home?

- **Food:** do you have a way to get food delivered?
- **Cleaning:** are your cleaning supplies stocked up?
- **Money:** can you budget for any higher bills or expenses? Will you save money from lower transport costs that you could spend elsewhere?
- **Work:** can you work from home or not? If not, what are your rights to payment or benefits?
- **Medication:** do you have enough medication, or a way to get more?
- **Health:** can you reorganise any planned therapy or treatments?
- **Commitments:** can someone else help you care for any dependents, walk your dog, or take care of any other commitments?
- **Connectivity:** have you checked the contact details of the people you see regularly, like their phone numbers or email addresses?
- **Routine:** can you create a routine or timetable for yourself? And if you live with other people, should you create a household schedule? Do you need to agree how the household will run with everyone at home all day?
- **Exercise:** is there any physical activity you can do inside your home, such as going up and down the stairs, using bean tins as weights, or exercises you can do in your chair?
- **Nature:** have you thought how you could access nature? Can you get some seeds and planting equipment, houseplants or living herbs?
- **Entertainment:** have you thought about things to do, books to read or TV shows to watch?
- **Relax:** have you got materials so you can do something creative, such as paper and colouring pencils?

This information was last updated on 18 March 2020.

The content reflects the best advice we have at this time.
For continued updates, please see <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>