

Recovery after Covid

This leaflet outlines what you might experience after Coronavirus (Covid19) and what can help your recovery. If you have required a stay in hospital, we also recommend www.post-covid.org.uk/getsupport

What to expect after Covid

You might continue to have different symptoms during your recovery from Covid. These are not unusual and it can help to know what to expect. They might last several weeks or even months.

- Chest pains - sometimes moving about the chest, often worse in certain postures
- Breathlessness – you might feel more aware of your breath, you might be finding it harder to do certain activities such as getting dressed, going upstairs or walking uphill
- Cough – this can last for up to six weeks, or more
- Loss of sense of smell/taste – most people report some return of smell/taste after 4-6 weeks
- Fatigue – you may feel more tired and have "brain fog", making concentration difficult
- Muscle aches and pains
- Trouble sleeping

"It felt like a bus had hit me. Both physically and mentally, and I realise now it has taken over a month to start to feel like me again."

You might also feel a range of emotions including low mood, sad, hopeless, worried about the future, feeling lonely and isolated, helplessness, irritability, anger, stressed, scared, and have frightening memories of being ill. Some people may also feel very relieved and grateful that they are getting better, or a mix of these more difficult and positive emotions. It can feel like an emotional rollercoaster.

What can help?

Taking extra care of yourself will stack the odds in your favour and help you recover from Covid. You might find this difficult because of how you are feeling. These feeling and symptoms can stop you doing the very things that will help. For example, you might feel too tired to go out, worried you could be getting ill again if you feel breathless or cough, or find muscle aches and pains that make activity feel unpleasant. It is normal to feel like this but it is vital you look after yourself by:

- Doing some gentle activity, building up slowly
- Eating well
- Getting outside. If you were not able to go outside before Covid because of a long-term condition make a plan for how you will get back to what you were doing
- Improving your sleep
- Staying in touch with other people
- Asking for more help if you need it
- Limit exposure to Covid related news to once or twice a day maximum

It is useful to write down what you are going to do. Looking at the list above, what might help you? You might like to use Covid Home Recovery Plan that goes with this leaflet to help you work out what to do next.

Where to get further information and support

- If you feel chest pain, breathlessness, or other symptoms are static or worsening rather than improving over time please contact your GP
- If you have been feeling stressed, low or worried for more than two weeks please contact Talking Therapies Southwark via www.slam-iapt.nhs.uk by email slm-tr.SPTS@nhs.net or by phone 0203 228 2194
- NHS website dedicated to recovery after Covid <https://covidpatientsupport.lthtr.nhs.uk/#/>
- Post-Covid support Hub run by Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation: <https://www.post-covid.org.uk/get-support/> or call 0300 222 5942 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)



Villa St logo? (maybe Southwark CCG or SELondon CCG if they OK it.)

Covid Home Recovery Plan

What can happen after Covid is that the symptoms get in the way of you doing the things that would help you recover faster. For example, you feel breathless so avoid activity when activity would help with breathlessness and also lift your mood. This can become a vicious cycle with you doing less and less:



Can you think of any vicious cycles you might be in after Covid? To reverse these cycles you need to take action. We recommend you choose one area at a time to work on, it might be activity and breathlessness or it might be something else from the list below.

1. Where do you want to start? Please tick one:

- Doing some gentle activity, building up slowly
- Eating well
- Getting outside. If you were not able to go outside before Covid because of a long-term condition make a plan for how you will get back to what you were doing
- Improving your sleep
- Staying in touch with other people
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Because you are recovering from Covid you might find that some of the activities you would have done previously are more difficult so it is really important to listen to your body to avoid doing too much too soon.

I had chest pains and cough and I felt breathless a lot. So I kept using my inhaler, but it didn't work, because it was Coronavirus, not asthma. Then I realised I had to start getting out more, and gradually I got my fitness back over about 5 weeks.

2. What are you going to do?

If the idea is vague, e.g. be more active, you are less likely to follow it through. A more specific action might be "Week 1: Go for a 5 minute walk every morning, increasing to 15 minutes daily by end of week." Then, if that feels ok, work up to a 15 minute walk twice daily by week 2. The more specific you can be the better. It also helps to write down what you are doing.

The questions below might help:

- Exactly what am I going to do? Where, when and how?
- Does this feel achievable? It is important to avoid 'Boom and bust' – doing too much, too soon
- Is there anyone I would like to support me with this? If so, you might like to share your plan with them
- How will I feel if I achieve this?

Remember taking extra care of yourself like this will stack the odds in your favour and help you recover from Covid.