

Looking after our wellbeing

How to look after your mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

What can help your mental health and wellbeing

Consider how to connect with others: Maintaining relationships with people you trust is important for your mental wellbeing. Think about how you can stay in touch with friends and family via telephone, video calls or social media instead of meeting in person – whether it's people you normally see often or connecting with old friends.

Help and support others: Think about how you could help those around you – it could make a big difference to them and can make you feel better too. Could you message a friend or family member nearby? Are there community groups that you could join to support others locally? Remember it's important to do this in line with guidance on coronavirus (COVID-19) to keep yourself and everyone safe. And try to be accepting of other people's concerns, worries or behaviours.

Talk about your worries: It is quite common to feel worried, scared or helpless about the current situation. Remember that this is a difficult time for everyone and sharing how you are feeling and the things you are doing to cope with family and friends can help them too. If you don't feel able to do that, there are people you can speak to via [NHS recommended helplines](#) or you could find support groups online to connect with.

Look after your physical wellbeing: Your physical health has a big impact on how you are feeling emotionally and mentally. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour which in turn can make you feel worse. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water, exercise inside where possible and outside once a day, and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs.

If you are able to go outside, consider walking or gardening (keeping the recommended 2 metres from others as outlined in the [social distancing guidance](#)). If you are staying at home, you can find free easy [10 minute work outs](#) from Public Health England or other exercise videos to try at home on the [NHS Fitness Studio](#). Sport England also has good tips for keeping active at home.

Look after your sleep: Feeling anxious or worried can make it harder to get a good night's sleep. Good-quality sleep makes a big difference to how you feel mentally and physically, so it's important to get enough.

Try to maintain regular sleeping patterns and keep good sleep hygiene practices – like avoiding screens before bed, cutting back on caffeine and creating a restful environment. The [Every Mind Matters sleep page](#) provides practical advice on how to improve your sleep.

Try to manage difficult feelings: Many people find the news about coronavirus (COVID-19) concerning. However, some people may experience such intense anxiety that it becomes a problem. Try to focus on the things you can control, including where you get information from and actions to make yourself feel better prepared.

It is okay to acknowledge some things that are outside of your control right now but constant repetitive thoughts about the situation which lead you to feel anxious or overwhelmed are not helpful. The [Every Mind Matters page on anxiety](#) and NHS [mental wellbeing audio guides](#) provide further information on how to manage anxiety.

Manage your media and information intake: 24-hour news and constant social media updates can make you more worried. If it is affecting you, try to limit the time you spend watching, reading, or listening to media coverage of the outbreak. It may help to only check the news at set times or limiting to a couple of checks a day.

Get the facts: Gather high-quality information that will help you to accurately determine your own or other people's risk of contracting coronavirus (COVID-19) so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as [GOV.UK](#), or the [NHS website](#), and fact check information that you get from newsfeeds, social media or from other people.

Think about how possibly inaccurate information could affect others too. Try not to share information without fact-checking against credible sources.

Think about your new daily routine: Life is changing for us all for a while. Whether you are staying at home or social distancing, you are likely to see some disruption to your normal routine.

Think about how you can adapt and create positive new routines – try to engage in useful activities (such as cleaning, cooking or exercise) or meaningful activities (such as reading or calling a friend). You might find it helpful to write a plan for your day or your week.

Do things you enjoy: When you are anxious, lonely or low you may do things that you usually enjoy less often, or not at all. Focussing on your favourite hobby, learning something new or simply taking time to relax indoors should give you some relief from anxious thoughts and feelings and can boost your mood.

If you can't do the things you normally enjoy because you are staying at home, try to think about how you could adapt them, or try something new. There are lots of free tutorials and courses online and people are coming up with innovative online solutions like online pub quizzes and streamed live music concerts.

Set goals: Setting goals and achieving them gives a sense of control and purpose – think about things you want or need to do that you can still do at home. It could be watching a film, reading a book or learning something online.

Keep your mind active: Read, write, play games, do crossword puzzles, sudokus, jigsaws or drawing and painting. Find something that works for you.

Take time to relax and focus on the present: This can help with difficult emotions, worries about the future, and can improve wellbeing. Relaxation techniques can also help some people to deal with feelings of anxiety. For useful resources see [Every Mind Matters](#) and [NHS' mindfulness page](#).

If you can, once a day get outside, or bring nature in: Spending time in green spaces can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. If you can't get outside much you can try to still get these positive effects by spending time with the windows open to let in fresh air, arranging space to sit and see a nice view (if possible) and get some natural sunlight, or get out into the garden if you can.

Remember that [social distancing guidelines](#) enable you to go outside to exercise once a day as long as you keep 2 metres apart from others who are not members of your household group.

Staying at home

Recent guidance is clear about the need for people to [stay at home](#). If you are feeling anxious it might help to think about potential challenges and make a plan for them.

Practical issues

Supplies: Think about how you can get any supplies you need – either from a neighbour, family friends or a delivery service so you don't worry about running out. Try to pick healthy food, especially as you might not get as much exercise as normal.

Financial concerns: You may be worried about work and money if you have to stay home – these issues can have a big impact on your mental health. For guidance on what your rights are at work, what benefits you are entitled and what further support is available please see our [guidance for employees](#) or advice from [citizens advice](#) or the [National Debt line](#).

If you care for other people: You may be worried about how to ensure care for those who rely on you – either your dependants at home or others that you regularly visit. Let your [local authority](#) know if you provide care, or support someone you don't live with. Further advice on creating a contingency plan is available from [Carers UK](#).