



Information for
patients and
carers

Psychological Wellbeing

Following hospital treatment for COVID-19

Are you recovering from COVID-19 having been discharged from hospital?

If you have spent a period of time in hospital because you had COVID-19, you may now be experiencing a range of unfamiliar feelings and reactions associated with the shock of what you have been through.

How might I expect to feel emotionally?

You may have difficulties collecting your thoughts and be experiencing a range of emotions about what has happened, for example, feeling:

- Anxious or worried
- Scared or fearful
- Angry
- Depressed or low in mood

What might I be thinking?

You may be noticing intrusive memories from your hospital experiences which could affect your sleep and cause vivid dreams and restlessness.

Such thoughts and images could appear 'out of the blue' and may be prompted by continuing news and media attention on COVID-19. Over time, they should become less severe and less frequent.

You may be tempted to try to ignore or 'block out' the thoughts and images. Limiting your exposure to news about the virus may be helpful in the early stages whilst you are coming to terms with your experiences. However, continuing to avoid your thoughts, memories or taking actions to avoid potential triggers in the longer-term can become unhelpful and could affect your recovery.

How might my body be feeling?

You may be experiencing ongoing physical difficulties as a result of the virus. You may also be experiencing physical changes in your body which may be common signs of anxiety, tension or stress, for example:

- Shakiness, trembling
- Tension and muscular aches (especially in the head and neck)
- Insomnia, tiredness, lethargy, fatigue
- Poor concentration, forgetfulness
- Palpitations, shallow rapid breathing, dizziness
- Feeling nauseous, vomiting, diarrhoea

Why am I feeling this way?

Although these emotions and physical sensations may be new for you and feel strange and unpleasant, it is important to understand that they are common and understandable responses to severe stress and shock having been through a significant or life threatening situation.

There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to feel. Following a traumatic experience, most people will be shaken by what has happened but, over time, most will adjust to their experiences with little or no long-term effects. Some may even feel a huge sense of relief or euphoria that they have survived and are recovering.

All reactions will be individual and not everyone will experience all of the feelings described or to the same degree.

What will help me recover?

- Try to respond kindly and compassionately towards yourself, taking your time to come to terms with what you have been through.

- Accepting support from others; talking to people to make sense of what you have been through. Even with current social distancing restrictions, find ways of keeping in touch with family and friends or other people you trust for support e.g. by phone, messaging, video technology. Don't be afraid to ask for what you need to feel better.
- Taking time out for yourself; you may choose to spend some time alone to rest, recuperate and to come to terms with what has happened.
- Where possible, establish a familiar routine at home, taking care not to overdo things and allowing yourself time to recover. Pace yourself and any activities to manage fatigue/tiredness associated with recovery from illness. A little is better than too much.
- Take care of yourself:
 - Sleep: It can take time to get back into a normal sleep routine after being in hospital. Try to establish a morning and bedtime routine. If you need to rest or sleep in the daytime during your recovery, limit your time asleep. Ask someone living with you to wake you or set an alarm. Avoid caffeine or heavy meals in the evening. Calm your mind before you sleep with gentle reading, listening to the radio or a relaxation exercise. Avoid looking at screens.
 - Eat healthily and drink regularly
 - Avoid unhelpful ways of coping, for example, non-prescribed drug use, alcohol use, sleeping all day, isolating yourself from social contact even if this needs to be by phone, video.
 - Plan pleasant, relaxing hobbies and gentle activities that you are able to do in your own home.
 - Work towards achievable goals, maybe keeping a record to help you remember your progress as you gradually recover

- Think about how you have overcome specific challenges in the past. What did you do? What did you say to yourself? Who was supportive or helpful in the past? What did you learn about how to cope with challenges? Could anything you did then be useful again now?
- Where possible, focus on what you CAN do, what you ARE able to achieve and what DOES feel in your control. Worry is a natural part of your recovery but the more you focus your mind on what is happening right now, the more you can do to help yourself remain calm and get well.

What if I need more support?

If you wish to talk to someone other than family or friends, you can contact:

The Wellbeing & Mental Health Service provided by Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Trust which is a 24/7 helpline to support the impact of Coronavirus on mental health.

Telephone: 0800 9154640 or text 'Hello' to **07862 022846**

Samaritans; a listening service to talk about anything that's troubling you, no matter how large or small the issue feels.

Telephone: 116 123

What if I feel I am not recovering?

There is no set time during which you 'should' come to terms with any unpleasant thoughts or feelings following your illness. However, we would hope you would notice improvements in the way you cope with your hospital experiences and memories in the first few weeks following discharge.

We would recommend that you monitor any difficulties that you are having for up to three months after discharge from hospital. If you

continue to experience difficulties that are persistent or become overwhelming, then it is important to speak to your GP about additional support you can access.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.lscft.nhs.uk

www.samaritans.org

<https://covidpatientsupport.lthtr.nhs.uk>

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Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Cantonese:

如果你希望以另外一種格式接收該資訊，請和我們聯絡，不必猶豫。

Gujarati:

જો તમને આ માહિતી બીજી રચના કે ફોર્મેટમાં મેળવવાની ઇચ્છા હોય, તો કૃપા કરી અમારો સંપર્ક કરતા અચકાશો નહિ.

Hungarian:

Kérjük, vegye fel velünk a kapcsolatot, ha más formában kéri ezt az információt.

Polish:

Jeżeli chciał(a)by Pan/Pani otrzymać niniejsze informacje w innym formacie, prosimy o kontakt.

Punjabi:

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਵਿਚ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਨਾ ਝਿਜਕੋ।

Urdu:

اگر آپ اس معلومات کو کسی اور صورت میں حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کرنے میں ہچکچاہٹ محسوس نہ کریں۔

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Division: Diagnostics and clinical support
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