

## Your GP Practice is Open and here for you...

- **General practice is still open**, but due to the coronavirus outbreak, how you contact your GP surgery will be different at the moment.
- Your NHS services have a range of measures in place to keep you safe from COVID19 including regular cleaning of patient areas and social distancing. Please ensure you wear a face covering to your appointment.
- **Face-to-face appointments are available to all patients where there is a clinical need.** You will be asked to first discuss your conditions over the phone or online with a member of the healthcare team to assess what would be most appropriate for you and which practice member would best provide it.
- **Most GP practices are also offering online consultations and video consultations, as well as telephone consultations.** These can be convenient and flexible ways to receive healthcare. **Where patients need to be seen by a health professional face-to-face, this will be arranged.** If you have a preference about how to access care you can discuss it with your practice.



To protect you from coronavirus, your GP practice will try to help you remotely and then see you face-to-face if needed.



## **COVID-19 Vaccinations**

A new page for vaccinations is now available to share available sites by place and to help you all encourage all those eligible to walk in or book to get their 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Covid-19 vaccine.

Please include a link to this site on your own websites and in any of your messages to patients and the public: <https://www.blackcountryandwestbirmccg.nhs.uk/your-health-services/health-advice/covid-19-vaccination>

## Long Covid - Long Term Effects of COVID-19

For some people, coronavirus (COVID-19) can cause symptoms that last weeks or months after the infection has gone. This is sometimes called post-COVID-19 syndrome or "long COVID".

How long it takes to recover from coronavirus is different for everybody.

### Information to Support Your Covid Recovery

COVID-19 continues to pose a serious risk to public health. There is a lot of misinformation that undermines our collective fight against the virus, so it is important you get the facts from a trusted source to keep yourselves safe, protect the NHS and ultimately, save lives.

If you are concerned about your recovery please use the resources below or visit [Your COVID Recovery | Supporting your recovery after COVID-19](#) if you are still concerned then contact your GP for advice.

### Long Covid General Resources

While coronavirus symptoms tend to pass quickly for most, there are some who continue to experience long term effects for additional weeks or months beyond the initial illness – this is known as long Covid. Please know that you are not alone, according to Office for National Statistics estimates, 1.1 million people in the UK were reporting long Covid symptoms in the four weeks to 6 March 2021. Long Covid can happen to anyone who has had COVID-19, even if the illness was mild, or they had no symptoms. 'Long Covid Support' has compiled a useful guide on the help and support available for those suffering with long Covid. Click [here](#) to view.

Other useful links:

<https://patient.info/news-and-features/long-covid-what-support-is-available>

<https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/long-covid/what-is-long-covid>

### Breathlessness Management

Respiratory illnesses, such as COVID-19, can cause breathlessness both during and whilst recovering. How you think and feel about breathing is important, it can affect our daily activities as well as our health and wellbeing. There are multiple approaches that can be used to tackle breathlessness, the main one being breathing techniques. This leaflet offers five different exercises used to control and settle your breathing, please see [here](#).

Alternatively, please click [here](#) for an insightful video on respiratory care that includes a walkthrough on positional advice.

Other useful links:

[Your Covid Recovery](#)

[How to cope with being short of breath \(positional advice\)](#)

[Respiratory Care Energy conservation](#)

[Respiratory Care Active cycle of breathing techniques](#)

[Respiratory Care How to cope with being SOB – breathing exercises](#)

[What can I do to manage my breathlessness?](#)

[Asthma UK - If you get COVID-19 and have asthma](#)

Helplines:

Asthma expert nurse helpline - 0300 222 5800

## **Voice and Swallowing**

In order to stop any food or fluid entering the lungs, our natural instinct is to hold our breath, however, Covid can make this difficult. If you find that COVID has affected your breathing, you may need to take action to help manage your coordination of breathing and swallowing. 'Your Covid Recovery' offers useful advice to ensure your breathlessness does not affect your eating or drinking whilst you are unwell. Please click [here](#) to view.

## **Cough Management**

Whilst recovering from Covid you may still experience a dry cough for some time which, if left unmanaged, can cause irritation and inflammation. It can be very difficult to control your cough, but for your airways to stay clear it is important that you keep practising. Please see [here](#) for a helpful guide on breathing exercises.

## **Appetite, taste, and smell**

If you are struggling to eat enough, or if you are losing weight or strength in your muscles, you may need to think differently about the foods you are eating. This leaflet provides important tips to help you get the most out of the foods you eat while you are unwell and may help you to regain some of the weight or strength you have lost. The malnutrition pathway website has produced a useful guide to follow. Click [here](#) to view.

Other useful links:

[Eating Well](#)

[Nutrition Support](#)

[Your Covid recovery – taste and smell](#)

[Your Covid Recovery – eating well](#)

## **Fatigue and Pacing**

Have you been feeling tired and exhausted despite getting plenty of sleep and rest? It is normal to feel tired from time to time but if this has been happening for an extended period, it is more than likely that you are suffering from post-viral fatigue. The Royal College of Occupational Therapists offer useful advice and activities on how to increase energy levels and gradually stabilise your body. Please see link [here](#) on how to manage post-viral fatigue after Covid-19.

Other useful links:

[College of Occupational Therapy – How to conserve your energy](#)  
[Your Covid Recovery – fatigue](#)  
[Your Covid Recovery – sleeping well](#)

## **Mobility and Function**

It is common to experience physical problems whilst recovering from Covid-19, this could include muscle weakness and joint stiffness, fatigue, as well as reduced mobility. If you feel that you are struggling to remain as active as you once were, please see CPS' leaflet that provides six easy to follow exercises to help rebuild your muscle strength. Please click [here](#) to view.

Other useful links:

[Your Covid recovery – returning to work](#)

## **Cognition**

Many people who have recovered from COVID-19 have reported feeling not like themselves: experiencing short-term memory loss, confusion, or an inability to concentrate. Problems with attention and concentration can make it hard to focus and ignore distractions day-to-day, therefore it is important that we manage these difficulties. Please see useful advice [here](#) on Pacing, Planning and Prioritising your daily activities.

## **Psychology and Mental Health**

Fear, worry, and stress are natural reactions to potential or actual threats especially during times when we are faced with uncertainty and the unknown. As a result, people's anxiety in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic is normal and understandable. Many of us are struggling with how the virus is affecting ourselves and our loved ones, but please remember that you

are not alone. The Mental Health Foundation website offers multiple resources to help us stay informed on what we can do to support and manage our wellbeing during such difficult times. For more information, please click [here](#).

Other useful links:

[Your Covid recovery – managing fear and anxiety](#)

[MIND](#)

[British Lung Foundation – How can I manage my anxiety?](#)

[Change, Loss and Bereavement](#)

### **Helplines:**

Mind - 0300 123 3393

The Samaritans - 116 123 (free) or email [jo@samaritans.org.uk](mailto:jo@samaritans.org.uk) 24 hours

Shout Crisis Text Line - text 'Shout' to 85258

Re-think Mental Illness - Mon-Fri 10am – 2pm, 0300 5000 927

### **Continence**

Urinary incontinence is a common problem affecting around 1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men, therefore it is not something that anyone should 'just live with'. Continence is a sensitive subject that can make people feel embarrassed, but it is a treatable medical condition and there is always help available. BCHC provide a service delivered by specialist continence nurses, who deliver bladder and bowel clinics in community settings. Do not suffer in silence, for more information please click [here](#), or alternatively please email [bchnt.continencereferrals@nhs.net](mailto:bchnt.continencereferrals@nhs.net).

Other useful links:

[National Association for Continence - resources](#)

### **Council Information**

Please see links below for further advice and information from your local council and their key partners, as well as the latest official Government information relevant to local government.

[Birmingham Council](#)

[Dudley Council](#)

[Sandwell Council](#)

[Walsall Council](#)

[Wolverhampton Council](#)

## **Help us, help you - NHS 111 First...**

If you have an urgent but non life-threatening medical need, make sure you use NHS 111 first rather than going straight to A&E.

If you do need urgent care, then NHS 111 can now book you in to be seen quickly and safely in A&E. NHS 111 is also able to direct patients to or book an appointment at Urgent Treatment Centres, GP surgeries, pharmacies, emergency dental services and walk-in clinics. Contacting NHS 111 first will also help the NHS to keep you safe by maintaining social distancing and ensure that you receive the right care in the right place, in a more timely and safe way.

However, you should still dial 999 if you have a life-threatening illness or injury.

Just think 111 first. When you think you need A&E, contact NHS 111 by phone or online.