



Health & Wellbeing



During COVID-19

We know that times are difficult at the moment and you are missing your friends, family and even coming in to see us here at the Hospice. We have put together this pack to support you and give you tips to help you cope at home. As always, we are still available on the phone so please do not hesitate to call us if you have any concerns.

Complementary Therapy

Nursing

Occupational Therapy

Physiotherapy

Social Work

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Taking Care of Yourself during COVID-19

Medication

- Keep an eye on your supply of your usual medication. Ongoing prescriptions can be issued by your GP as usual, but many GP surgeries are now arranging this over the phone. If you need a new prescription, we suggest you contact the GP surgery by phone and your individual practice will let you know how this can be arranged.
- If your daily routine has changed a lot, be sure to monitor your medication routine so that you do not miss doses of medication. It may be that you are getting up or going to bed at different times, or that a family member or carer was reminding you about medication. It may help to keep a medication diary to be sure you are managing your medication well.

Nutrition

- At the moment your daily routine may be very different from usual. Some people do not have their usual supports for preparing meals or shopping for food. Other people may find their daily routine has changed and they are missing some meals as they are resting, or going to bed earlier. You may find you are less interested in food or preparing meals. It is important to ensure you are eating well in a way that suits you and your routine. Lots of people prefer a few small snacks to large meals, or prefer lighter foods to large portions. If you need more help to ensure you have the groceries you need, or with preparing meals, let family or friends know so that they can support you with this. If you are concerned that you may not have access to support from family or friends, please let us know so that we can advise you on other supports, which may be available in the community.

Managing your illness

- We are here to support you with your illness, with symptoms or new issues, or to talk about how your illness is affecting your life. If you had been attending Hospice Day Services you will be supported by regular phone calls from our team. If you are linked in with the Community Palliative Care Team, much of the support can also be by telephone, and visits at home can still be facilitated if necessary. We encourage you or your family members to contact us at any time if you are having difficulty with symptoms or are concerned about your illness. We will continue to support you during this time.
- As much of our interaction with you is now by telephone, it may be helpful to keep a diary about symptoms you have, medication taken, for example, for pain and any other issues you are having. This can be really helpful when we phone you, as it can be hard to recall sometimes.
- Remember that other community supports such as your Public Health Nurse and GP are still available if needed, and can continue to provide support to you at home.

We know that many of our patients have seen huge changes in their daily lives in recent weeks and that this can be very difficult when living with illness. We know many of you miss the regular visits to the hospice, or are missing having more supports at home. Please let us know if things are difficult so that we can help you to access supports.

Why Exercise?

Exercise can be beneficial not just for our physical health, but also emotional and psychological health, fatigue and breathlessness. Exercise is proven to increase energy levels, reduce fatigue, improve quality of life and increase ability to complete activities of daily living. Motivating ourselves to be active is difficult particularly when you cannot go out and do the activities that you enjoy.

The right amount of activity is something that challenges you a little but does not overly increase your levels of stress or symptoms. When we are not physically active, our muscles can weaken which means that it might be harder to do the everyday activities.



This is why it is important to try to remain as physically active as possible. This will help you to maintain your independence and reduce the chance of you having a fall. Sometimes after a fall, you are less confident about walking and exercising. However, continuing with an exercise programme, even if it needs to be changed, will be helpful.

Exercise does not have to be formal such as a class or following an exercise programme. Just pottering around your home or garden if you are able can be exercise. If you are afraid of falling, chair based exercises can be just as beneficial.

We have put together and included in this pack some exercises that may be helpful to do at home. If you are afraid of falling or feel unsteady then it is important to hold onto something sturdy when exercising. If you don't feel able to do the standing part, just try the seated exercises.

For the best results try to do it every day if you can. It can be helpful to do it at the same time each day to keep motivation levels up and to build a daily routine. When starting any exercise programme you should start slowly and gradually build up the amount of exercise you do each week.

How to exercise safely:

To ensure you enjoy your exercise fully, please take note of the following advice to ensure you exercise safely. It is important to stop exercise if you are feeling any of the following:

- Getting chest pain or tightness
- Feeling dizzy or sick
- Feeling clammy
- Getting more wheezy
- Feeling very tired

Please let us or your G.P. know if you are experiencing any of these symptoms during exercise.

It is important that you eat before exercising, drink water and wear comfortable or loose fitting clothing.

How should exercise feel?

You may find yourself short of breath when you exercise – this is normal. As you get fitter, you may find that you are less breathless during exercise and that your breathing recovers quicker. During exercise, you should feel breathless but still able to say at least three words in each breath. The table on the next page will help you to pace your exercises.

Breathlessness

Many people become afraid of exercising when they are short of breath. Everyone gets breathless when exercising. Everybody is different and will be able to do a different amount and type of exercise.

The Borg Breathlessness scale gives you a guideline as to how much exercise you can do and more importantly if you are doing too much. It is a scale of how short of breath you feel at any given moment.

Scale	Severity	Can you.....?
0	No Breathlessness At All	Sing / whistle
0.5	Very Very Slight (Just Noticeable)	Sing / Whistle
1	Very Slight	Talk comfortably
2	Slight Breathlessness	Talk but are aware of your breathing
3	Moderate	Say short sentences
4	Somewhat Severe	Say 1—2 words per breath
5	Severe Breathlessness	Say one word per breath
6		
7	Very Severe Breathlessness	Occasionally say one word answers
8		
9	Very Very Severe (Almost Maximum)	Unable to talk
10	Maximum	Unable to talk

When you are doing exercise it is ok for your breathlessness to reach level 3-4 on the scale but you should not be going any higher. If you feel you are moving towards level 5 you should stop and rest until your breathing settles.

Positions that might help if you are feeling short of breath



Lean back against a wall with your feet well out from the wall. Allow your shoulders to relax and your weight to rest onto the wall.

Stand leaning forward onto a ledge, with your elbows out to the side.



Place 1 or two pillows on a table. Sit forwards, moving from your hips to support your chest and head on the pillows.

Lean forward and allow your elbows or forearms to rest on your knees. Keep your back straight as you lean.



Breathing techniques

Pursed lip breathing is one of the simplest ways to control shortness of breath. It's an easy way to slow your breathing, making each breath more effective.

What does it do?

- Relieves shortness of breath and slows your rate of breathing
- Keeps the airways open longer and decreases effort of your breathing
- Improves breathing patterns by moving old air out of the lungs and allowing for new air to enter the lungs
- Can help you to relax

When should I use this technique?

You can use this technique during the difficult part of any activity such as bending, lifting or stair climbing or when completing your exercise programme.

Practice this technique regularly even when not breathless so you feel confident and can get the correct breathing pattern.

Pursed Lip Breathing Technique

With regular practice, this technique will seem natural to you.

1. Breathe in (inhale) slowly through your nose for two counts, keeping your mouth closed. Don't take a deep breath; a normal breath will do. It may help to count to yourself: inhale, one, two. *(figure to right)*



2. Pucker or "purse" your lips as if you were going to whistle or gently flicker the flame of a candle. *(figure to left)*

3. Breathe out (exhale) slowly and gently through your pursed lips while counting to four. It may help to count to yourself: exhale, one, two, three, four. *(figure to right)*



What to do if you have a fall

Unfortunately, falls do happen and can happen to anyone. The following advice will help to manage if you do fall.

Ways to call for help

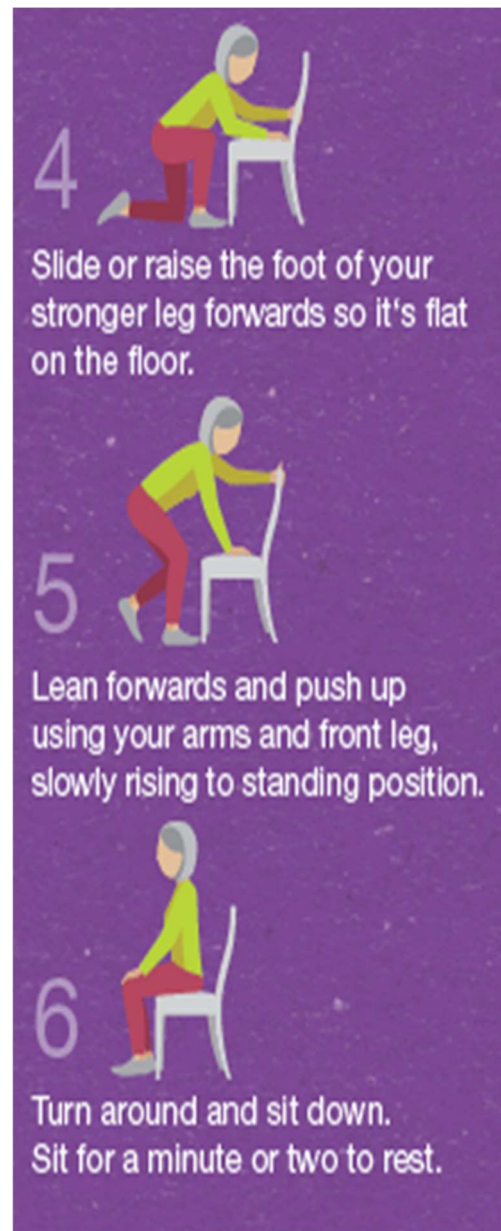
- Shout out for help if there is someone in the house with you, if you are on your own neighbours may hear. You could also bang on the wall to alert neighbours.
- Press your pendant alarm if you have one and state that you have fallen – they will contact your family and arrange help for you.
- If you don't have a pendant alarm, use your phone to call family, a friend or a neighbour or ring 999 for an ambulance.

What to do while you wait for help

- When waiting for help, stay warm.
- Cover yourself in whatever is close to hand – blanket, coat, tablecloth, towel.
- Put a cushion under your head if you can.
- Try to roll from side to side and move all limbs if they are pain free, in attempt to keep up circulation and warmth.

How to get up off the floor

If you are hurt or injured and not able to get up, call for help.
If you are unhurt after your fall and think you might be able to get up,
– try these following six steps (taking rest breaks in between).



Keeping Busy – The Big Three

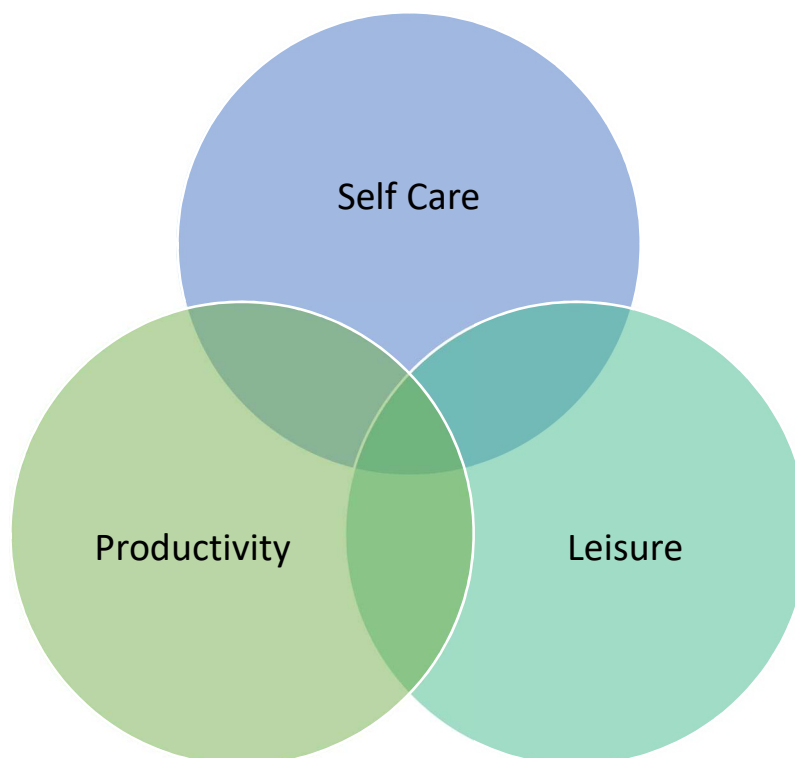
We can often consider the activities we do every day in terms of three categories.

Self-Care – These are activities you do to look after yourself, such as taking a shower, brushing your teeth, curling your hair.

Productivity – These are any activities we do to feel productive, such as cleaning the kitchen, washing the car, doing household shopping.

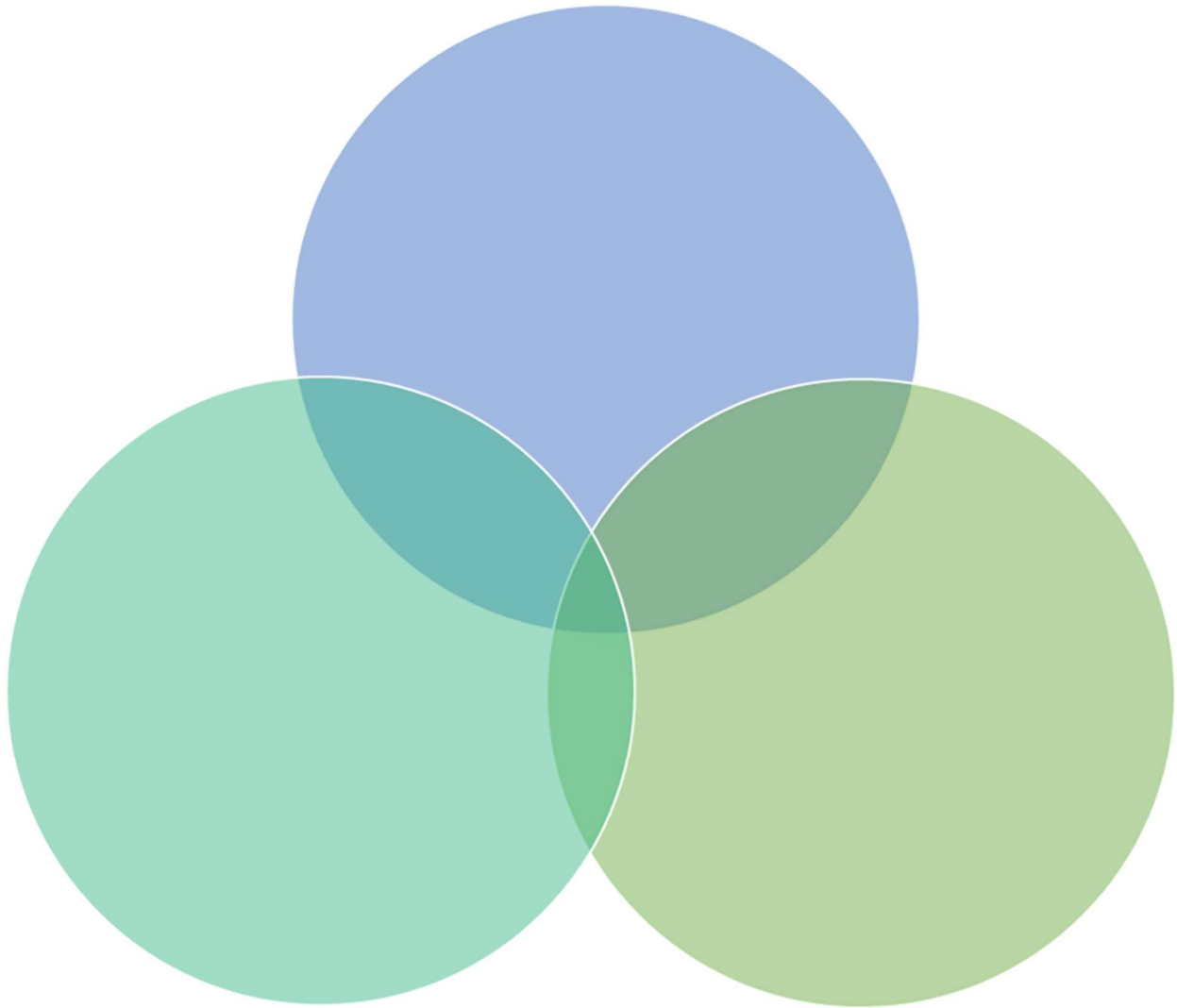
Leisure – These are the activities we participate in for enjoyment, such as our hobbies and interests, maybe music, watching sport, reading.

Some activities can overlap between categories, e.g. gardening may be considered both a productive and a leisure activity.



On this page you can fill in the activities you do into the three categories. Aim to bring some balance between all three, e.g. try not to have too many self-care activities and not enough leisure.

Self-Care



Productivity

Leisure

Keeping Busy – Routines

Routines provide patterns to our daily lives and support us in being able to do what we need to do when we want to do it. Predictable routines can provide a sense of stability.

It is important to try and maintain a predictable routine during the current COVID-19 restrictions. Doing small activities and engaging in some leisure interests can have a positive impact on maintaining your overall health and wellbeing.

Remember to try balance the three categories previously mentioned. Each day try to include some light exercise, social contact (phone calls, video calls), relaxation time and leisure.

Try and fill in the routine sheet for the week. It does not have to be perfect and each section does not have to be filled in, but it may help provide you with structure to your day and give you a sense of purpose.

The following is an example of a weekly routine.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning	Breakfast Shower Newspaper	Radio Breakfast	Breakfast Wordsearch	Breakfast Light exercises	Radio Breakfast	Breakfast Exercise	Shower Breakfast
Afternoon	Baking Fairy Cakes	Exercises	Gardening	Mindful colouring Ring a friend	Exercise Housework – clean kitchen countertops	Bird watching in back garden	Mass on TV Lunch
Evening	Dinner Listen to music	Watch movie on TV Dinner	Dinner Ring a friend Shower	Dinner Watch TV	Late Late Show	Reading Dinner	Bath with relaxing music

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

Anxiety

It is important to remember that anxiety is a natural reaction to this worrying and uncertain time we are now faced with. There are many ways to cope with worry and anxiety including listening to relaxing music, engaging in meaningful occupation, completing moderate activities, or engaging in mindfulness and meditation practice.

When we become anxious it impacts on our body, mind and behaviour. It can affect your routine and prevent you from engaging in activities you value. It can also affect our minds and can result in negative thoughts. We can learn ways to use the mind to relax the body, reduce stress and improve your confidence to engage in activities that are important to us.

Tips for Getting Through a Moment of Being Overwhelmed

Draw your attention to your breath and focus on your breathing

Tune into your senses, for example, feel / touch something next to you

Remind yourself that this is a moment in time and it will pass

Imagine or envision a calming place such as the beach and waves kissing the shore

Tense up muscle groups in your body and release tension slowly

Breath Moving

As you breathe in, imagine you are moving your breath to the top of your head

As you breathe out, imagine you are moving your breath to your sit bones

Each time you breathe in; move the breath to the top of your head

Each time you breathe out, move the breathe to your sit bones

Breathe in this circuit for ten cycles

A Short Body Scan

Begin by bringing your attention into your body

You can close your eyes if that's more comfortable for you

You can notice your body seated wherever you are seated, feeling the weight of your body on the chair

Take a few deep breaths

As you take a deep breath, bring in more oxygen, enlivening the body.

As you exhale, have a sense of relaxing more deeply.

You can notice your feet on the floor, notice the sensations of your feet touching the floor. The weight and pressure, vibration, heat.

You can notice your legs against the chair, pressure, pulsing, heaviness, lightness.

Notice your back against the chair.

Bring your attention into your stomach area. If your stomach is tense or tight, let it soften. Take a breath.

Notice your hands, are your hands tense or tight. See if you can allow them to soften.

Notice your arms. Feel any sensation in your arms. Let your shoulders be soft.

Notice your neck and throat. Let them be soft. Relax.

Soften your jaw. Let your face and facial muscles be soft.

Then notice your whole body present. Take one more breath.

Be aware of your whole body as best you can.

Take a breath, and then when you are ready you can open your eyes.

SLEEP



Sleep is often affected by stress and anxiety

It can sometimes be hard to tell if you are anxious because you can't sleep or you can't sleep because you are anxious. By tackling the symptoms of stress you may find that your sleep also improves.

Try to go to bed at roughly the same time each night

Make sure your bed is comfortable and the room is at a nice temperature

Put a to do list in your bedside locker so you can jot down any jobs you have to do or thoughts that cross your mind

Try a healthy bedtime routine – for 30 minutes before you go to bed do something you find relaxing

Aromatherapy Blend for Relaxation/Aid Sleep

In this pack, you will find a tub of cream with aromatherapy oils blended in

The Aromatherapy blend consists of the following essential oils in a moisturising base:

Roman Chamomile is chosen for its soft fragrance, its properties include calming, relaxing, comforting and promote sleep.

Frankincense is chosen for its powerful aroma, its properties include calming, promoting falling and staying asleep, strongly deepening the breath.

Lavender is chosen for its sweet herbaceous fragrance, its properties include calming stress, relaxing, promoting and introducing sleep.



How to Use the Aromatherapy Blend

The easiest way to benefit from the blend is to use it as a hand moisturiser. Take a pea-sized amount from the tub and massage into hands. Then cup your hands gently around your nose and inhale the scent for a few breaths. The blend may be applied a couple of times a day but especially prior to bed time.

Alternatively, the individual or a family member may massage the blend into easy to reach parts of the body, e.g. legs/arms/chest area.

Further supplies of the blend are available on request.

Supporting Carers

When you take on the role of a carer; either living with a loved one or visiting regularly, there are many different roles that you take on as part of this. You may now also be doing this without the usual supports from adult children, extended family or friends. It may also be that you have cut back on professional carers coming to your home as you try to limit risks. This places a further burden on you.

But what about your needs? We understand that talking about self-care can sometimes sound like a fantasy that does not fit with your reality. Getting out for a walk, or having any meaningful break may be a luxury that you cannot afford. In our carer's group we encourage people to consider short self-care activities that can be incorporated into some of your daily routines. While we cannot have our carers group at the moment, we wanted to share with you some of the information we would normally share during the group.

The first thing to consider is just stopping to think about the impact of caring on you. Simply acknowledge that your life is now very different to how it had been. Like everyone else, your life has changed because of COVID-19. However, you are also dealing with life changing circumstances as you and your loved one adapt to living with serious illness.

Here are some ideas to help you to take care of yourself:

- Stay connected to your friends and family. It can be easy to slip into a pattern where you don't interact with others because it can take such energy. Depending on your skills in the area of technology you may be able to stay connected by using a variety of social media options such as WhatsApp video, Zoom or FaceTime. Sometimes a good old fashioned chat on the phone can be a nice connection.

- Try to eat well. You probably spend time trying to ensure that the person you are caring for is well nourished. It is equally important that you are too as you do not know how long you may have to sustain this role
- Rest and good sleep routines are helpful in ensuring that you can sustain caring. Try to rest when you can, if your loved one is sleeping during the day it might help to have a short nap if night-time sleep is disturbed.
- You may have a heightened fear of you or your loved one contracting COVID-19 as you hear so much talk about 'vulnerable people'. Try to limit your exposure to reports and news, some people suggest just watching or listening to the news once a day. If you have support coming into your home do not be afraid to insist that the person adheres to all of the guidelines regarding hand hygiene, wearing masks and social distancing.
- In our carers group we practice a short mindfulness exercise. This may or may not be something that you are familiar or comfortable with. Basically, it is about sitting still, closing your eyes and being aware of your breathing. It can be a way to take a break from your worries. There are lots of guided meditations online and you could chose those that are no longer than 5 minutes.
- In our group, carers talk to us about their worries for the future and what end of life might look like. It likely that you are having such thoughts but not sharing them. The social workers at St Francis Hospice are continuing to support people throughout this crisis. We see the need to allow carers to express their feelings and fears and provide telephone support and guidance.

Contact Information:

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