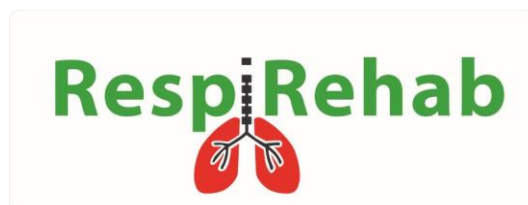


# Recovering after COVID-19: A Patient Information Guide

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Helping you to recover  
and manage your symptoms  
after COVID-19

This guide was created by the cardio-respiratory therapists and physiotherapists at ReLiva Physiotherapy & Rehab as part of RespiRehab, a Covid Recovery Support Initiative and is based on published evidence/ expert opinion. Within this document, you will find information about recovering from Covid-19 [**self-management**], **especially during home isolation and after discharge from hospital.**



[www.respirehab.com](http://www.respirehab.com)

A Respiratory Rehabilitation Programme focused on Recovery of Lungs and  
Reducing shortness of breath (dyspnea)

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## WHAT IS CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)?

COVID-19 is a highly contagious virus that mainly attacks the lungs. The disease is caused by the novel SARS-CoV-2 virus, also known as coronavirus.

**The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are:**

- new continuous cough
- sore throat
- fever
- fatigue
- muscle aches
- shortness of breath when moving around
- sputum production
- loss of appetite/taste/smell

Some people may require hospitalisation to treat these symptoms.

**The severity and duration of symptoms for people who have COVID-19 can vary.**

For most people, symptoms last 7-14 days and will be very mild. In some cases, the disease will have a lasting impact on their health.

NHS (UK) suggests the following to manage mild symptoms:

- stay hydrated
- take paracetamol if you have a temperature
- take rest
- activity shouldn't be completely avoided - get up and move about your room at regular intervals.

**If you need additional advice and enquiry with respect to COVID-19, email on [ncov2019@gov.in](mailto:ncov2019@gov.in). Government Helpline: +91-11-23978046; Toll Free: 1075. Download Aarogya Setu app.**

## WHAT DO I DO IF MY SYMPTOMS GET WORSE?

It is important to monitor your symptoms regularly. If you get one of the following:

- Worsening shortness of breath
- A new or returning fever
- Worsening ability to concentrate
- Chest pain

**Please contact your doctor for medical advice and emergency.**

## HOW DO I RECOVER, IF I HAVE COVID-19?

If you have tested positive for Covid-19, you may be advised to get hospitalised or stay under home isolation by your medical advisor as per the severity of their symptoms and the prevailing municipal guidelines in your locality.

However, one thing that is clear is that few of those affected will continue to have long lasting symptoms impacting their health.

Corona virus mainly impacts the lungs and therefore **some patients continue to feel breathless and fatigued for an extended period of time.**

This makes breathing exercises crucial for the recovery of lungs. The merits of undertaking a structured Respiratory Rehabilitation Programme cannot be emphasised enough to ensure relief from symptoms and overall Lung recovery in a safe, structured and timely manner.

## HOW MIGHT I FEEL AFTER HAVING COVID-19?

You may find that your symptoms last for weeks or possibly months, especially if you have been in hospital or had severe COVID-19 symptoms. This pack contains information on how to manage the following symptoms:

- A. Ongoing breathlessness
- B. Post viral cough
- C. Severe fatigue
- D. Muscle weakness
- E. Difficulties with memory/confusion

It may be more difficult to do the things you are normally able to do, such as housework, having a wash, getting dressed or walking up and down the stairs.

The subsequent sections in this information guide address self-management techniques for the above symptoms.

## MANAGING BREATHLESSNESS

Breathlessness happens as it takes longer to empty your lungs. The airflow is slower because the disease makes airways narrower or lungs less elastic.


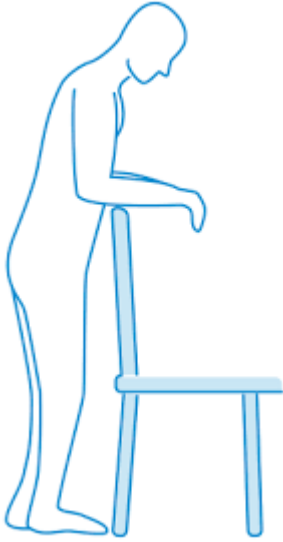




### Stay Calm

When it's hard to breathe, it's normal to get anxious, making you feel even more short of breath. That is why it is important to keep your cool.

Make sure you have good circulation in the room by opening a window or door.

## Positions to Manage Breathlessness

These positions will help ease your breathlessness and can be used when resting.

<p><b>Relaxed Sitting</b></p> 	<p><b>Forward Lean Standing</b></p> 	<p><b>Backward Lean Standing</b></p> 
<p><b>Sit Leaning Forward</b></p> 	<p><b>Forward Lean Sitting (Supported)</b></p> 	<p><b>High Side Lying</b></p> 

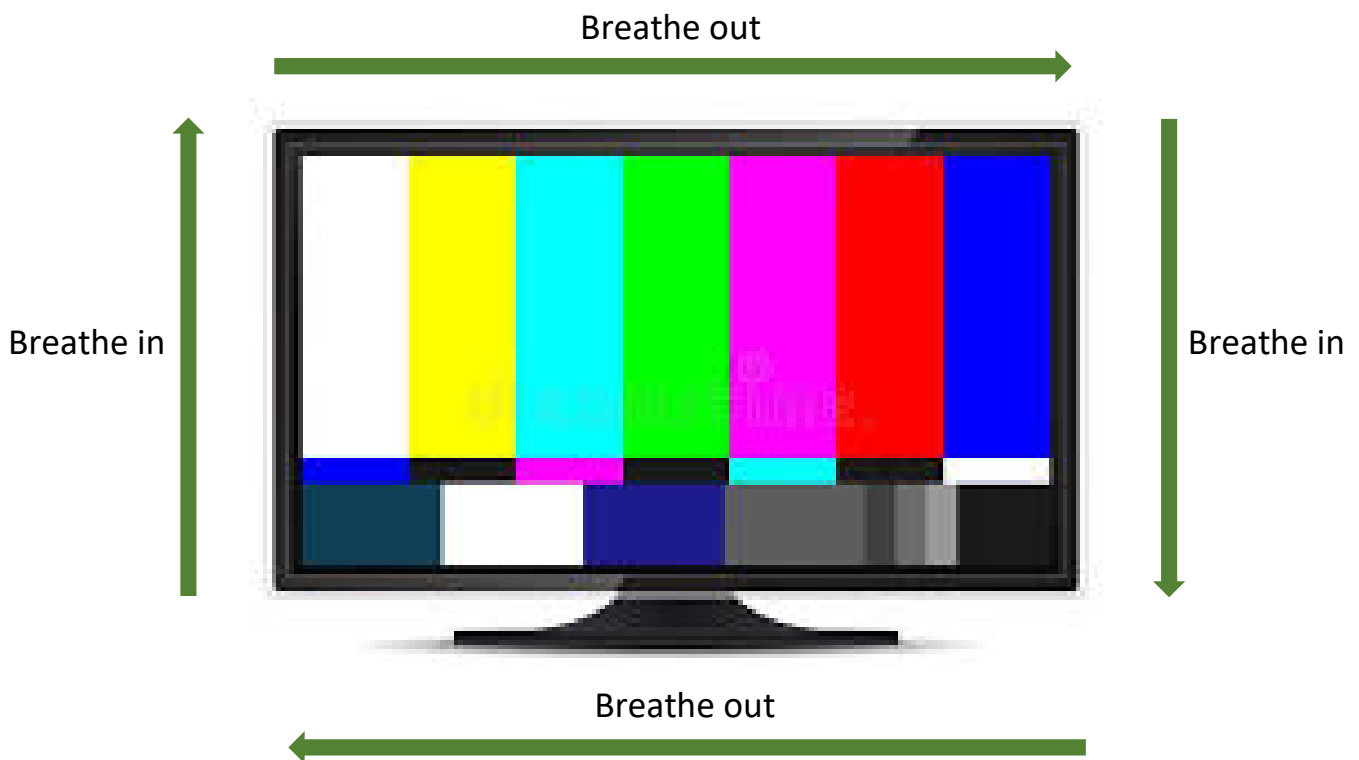
## Exercises to Manage Breathlessness

The muscles that help you breathe need to be strengthened, as you recover from your lung infection. These muscles include the diaphragm as well as the muscles in the chest wall.

Start with the following exercise on your own.

Place yourself in a comfortable position (sitting or standing). Look for a large rectangle shape around you that is easy to see fully. This could be a TV, fridge, window or a door.

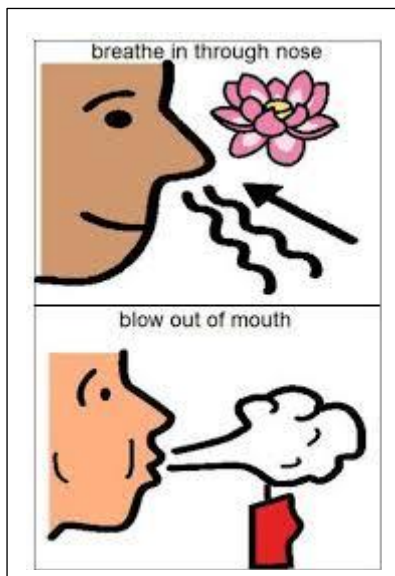
Visualise along the sides of the rectangle, breathing in while your eyes move along the short side and breathing out while your eyes move along the long side. This will help you breathe out longer than how you breathe in and also pace it.



If you continue to experience breathing trouble, you should consider taking a supervised Respiratory Rehabilitation Programme. Respiratory (or Pulmonary) Rehabilitation is a program of exercises that helps you improve your shortness of breath, increase your exercise capacity and improve your recovery.

## Breathing Techniques

Slow and controlled breathing with specific types of Pranayam and breathing techniques will help you stay calm. You will feel confident to deal with shortness of breath, when it sets in.



### Breathing Control:

- Take a slow breath in through your nose
- Relax your shoulders and neck
- Feel the air fill into your lungs: from the bottom of the lungs to the top of your chest.
- Breathe out long from the mouth (as if blowing out a candle).

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### INTERESTING FACT

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Additional Oxygen won't completely take away your shortness of breath, but it may help you feel less breathless during everyday activities.

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## Pace Your Activities

The essence of Pacing is about 'listening to your body'. Slow down if necessary or take short breaks if needed, to stay in control and manage breathlessness on a day-to-day basis. Remember a certain level of breathlessness is good for you.

Understand your current energy levels and plan your daily activities accordingly. (Read more about this on Page 10)



## MANAGING YOUR COUGH

Cough is the one of the most common symptoms for Covid-19. You may have dry cough or you may have productive phlegm.

### Managing a Dry Cough

- Stay well hydrated
- Drinking warm water with honey will help soothe throat
- Avoid taking large sips. Take small sips one after the other
- When coughing, if you do not have something to drink handy; then try swallowing repeatedly. This will have the same effect as sipping water.
- Do steam inhalation

### Managing Productive Cough

You may find that you have a productive cough and mucus in your lungs after COVID-19.

- Stay well hydrated
- Do steam inhalation
- If cough is bothering you while resting, move to lying to your side. This will help drain the phlegm.

**Important:** Follow hand hygiene & cough etiquette. Dispose used tissue/ napkin safely, in line with WHO recommended Infection Prevention Control guidelines for Covid-19.

### Exercises to help clear your chest

There are exercises and positions that can help you clear your chest. Your doctor or Respiratory therapist may recommend these to you. These are best done under supervision as per the specified dosage and frequency based on the severity of your symptoms.

## MANAGING FATIGUE

You may find your energy levels fluctuate from day to day. This may be particularly true for those who have just been discharged from the hospital.

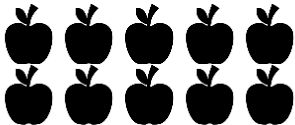


Simple activities may seem difficult, including accessing toilet, having a bath, walking around the house, managing your daily routine among others. Strategies to conserve your energy may be particularly beneficial to manage this fatigue.

**If you find your activities of daily living difficult, you may need to consult your doctor or a physiotherapist to complete a structured rehabilitation after assessment.**

### Understanding your energy levels

National Health Services (UK) uses the following example to help understand how tiring different activities may be for you – to understand the fatigue. This awareness will enable you to manage your energy better.

Choose what you do wisely so you have energy to do the activities that are most important to you.

	Imagine you had 10 apples of energy for your day
	<b>When you are feeling well</b> , it may feel like you are using only half an apple energy to get up from bed
	<b>Whilst you are recovering</b> it may now feel like needing 4 apples energy to only get up from bed. This leaves only 6 apples left to use for the rest of the day.

Sleep is important. Calm yourself and get as much rest as you'd like.

## MANAGING EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Staying isolated after Covid-19, whether in the hospital or at home leaves you with feelings of regret, resentment, loneliness, helplessness and depression.

Recognize that these are natural after what you have gone through and you are not to blame.

Use phones and video calls to engage with family and friends.

Avoid blue light exposure for atleast 1 hour prior to bedtime by turning off your TV, enabling night shift mode on your mobile or laptop.

Aim for atleast 7 hours of sleep every night.

### Relaxation Techniques

Relaxation will help you stay calm, sleep better, control anxiety and reduce overall discomfort.

There are many techniques available to help you stay relaxed. Please explore what suits you. You could choose from Meditation, Music Therapy, Prayer and Art Therapy among others.

Doodling, Mandala art, coloring and reading are some of the many non-exertional hobbies that you can take up. These will help divert your attention and help you stay relaxed.

## MANAGING WEAKNESS




To recover from weakness, a right mix of diet and physical activity is required.

### Diet after COVID-19

Change of taste and sometimes a complete loss of taste and smell for a period of time is common after Covid-19. However, it is important to eat well in order to recover.

- Staying hydrated is important for your body to function well and even more so when it is fighting infection.
- Our body needs more building blocks (Proteins) to repair cells and enough Vitamins and Minerals to help the recovery process along.

#### How to get enough?

Proteins	3 hand size items daily	Beans, Pulses, Nuts, Fish, eggs, soyabean & other proteins	
Dairy	3 thumb size items daily	Milk, Curd, Butter-milk (Mattha/ Chaas), Paneer, Cheese etc	
Vitamins & Minerals	5 handfuls daily	Fruits & vegetables Choose different colors – Eat with the rainbow	

If this is difficult, your doctor may prescribe a supplement to you. If you need more help, you can refer to a dietitian.

## Physical Activity after COVID-19

Spending time in the hospital or being at home with Covid-19 can lead to muscle weakness especially in your legs. This may be hospital acquired or due to lack of activity.

Leading health organisations across the world propose that it is not harmful to get out of breath when doing physical activity. **This is a normal response.**

However, when you've been seriously ill, you may feel differently about things and may respond differently to physical activities too. Practice the following strategies.

- If you are too breathless to talk, slow down to catch your breath.
- Understand your current capability and space out your activities accordingly.
- You might have been given some exercises to do in the hospital by a physiotherapist. Make sure you keep doing these regularly.
- Do not overdo it. Try to increase your activity slowly.




If you are unsure, or want to learn what exercises you can do and how much, contact a physiotherapist. Physiotherapists are best suited to guide you with muscle movements and systematically progress you to get back to normal activities.

**Your physical capability will gradually improve. A structured rehabilitation program will make the recovery possible in a safe and timely manner.**

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY – HOW HARD SHOULD IT BE?

### Breathlessness Scale

Walk briskly for six minutes by the clock and check your breathlessness.

	<b>0</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
Continue with self-management at home 	<b>0.5</b>	<b>Very, very slight (just noticeable)</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>Very slight</b>
	<b>2</b>	<b>Slight</b>
Enroll for RespiRehab Programme to improve lung function while you stay at home 	<b>3</b>	<b>Moderate</b>
	<b>4</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>
	<b>5</b>	<b>Severe</b>
	<b>6</b>	
	<b>7</b>	<b>Very Severe</b>
	<b>8</b>	
Consult your doctor immediately 	<b>9</b>	<b>Very, very severe</b>
	<b>10</b>	<b>Maximum</b>

## WHAT TO DO IF MY SYMPTOMS DO NOT IMPROVE?

The duration of time that it takes to recover from Covid-19 varies from person to person. For some it will be days, others weeks or months.

The more severe your symptoms, the longer it might take you to recover completely.

A structured Rehabilitation programme like that of RespiRehab ensures that you recover in a safe and timely manner.

If symptoms are severe and/or persist even after 6-8 weeks, please contact your doctor for further review.

### RespiRehab for COVID-19

RespiRehab is a focussed Pulmonary / Respiratory Rehabilitation Programme, guided by **Cardio-Respiratory physiotherapists of ReLiva** ([www.reliva.in](http://www.reliva.in)), India's largest chain of physiotherapy clinics.

- For patients suffering from Post Covid-19 breathing issues
- Reduce breathlessness & fatigue
- Improve your lung function, oxygen saturation, stamina & physical strength
- Without stepping out of your home

The programme is administered online and is personalised based on your symptoms and discomforts. You will continue to stay at home and the therapists will guide and telemonitor your progress with video visits.

A tailor-made programme will be given to you to include exercises and elements to target recovery

- of the overall pulmonary and muscle loss that can occur after a lengthy hospital stay
- of the respiratory symptoms and fatigue during home isolation

Click on [www.respirehab.com](http://www.respirehab.com) to know more.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Government of India,  
<https://www.mohfw.gov.in/>

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ReLiva Physiotherapy & Rehab <https://reliva.in>

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in your care, and wish you the best of your recovery. Please contact us at [+91 9920991584](tel:+919920991584) to make an appointment.