

A guide to managing the symptoms of COVID-19

Torbay and South Devon Palliative Care Advice

This information summarises the guidance Association for Palliative Medicine of Great Britain and Ireland.

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This information is to help you to manage symptoms the of COVID-19 illness for yourself or somebody you are looking after.

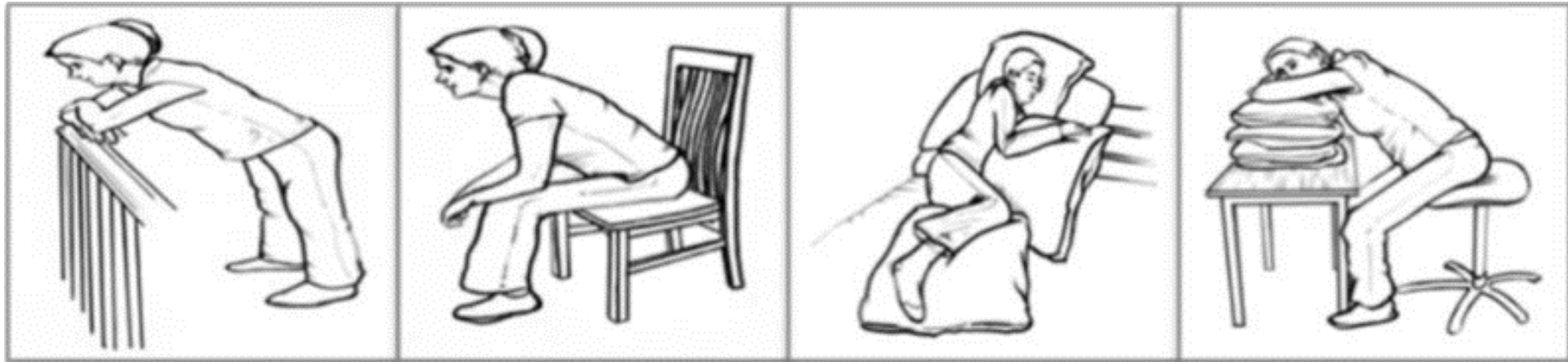
These techniques are the mainstay of treatment in mild and moderate disease and are beneficial alongside medication management in more severe disease. The same principals apply when a person is dying. Your doctor or clinician can help guide you on prescription medication use.



Breathlessness is the sensation of struggling with breathing. It occurs when the lungs are irritated or the body is struggling with not enough oxygen to its tissues and organs. If you are feeling severely breathless it is important to have medical advice on managing this. To improve breathlessness you can:

- positioning – tilting the body forward can help reduce breathlessness
- relaxation techniques – from guided meditation to deep breathing, more information can be found on the Rowcroft leaflet:
<https://rowcrofthospice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Rowcroft-Hospice-Breathlessness.pdf>
- reduce room temperature, open a window to allow a breeze
- cooling the face by using a cool flannel or cloth
- portable fans are not recommended for use during outbreaks of infection





Forward lean 1

Forward lean 2

Adapted forward lean for lying

Adapted forward lean for sitting

Cough occurs when the airway and lungs are irritated.

To reduce coughing you can:

- humidify room air- put a bowl of water beneath radiators or run a shower
- sipping drinks regularly
- honey & lemon in warm water
- suck cough drops / hard sweets if able to swallow normally
- elevate the head when sleeping
- avoid smoking



Confusion, anxiety and distress

People with high temperature or who are severely breathless may become disorientated or confused. Those with underlying memory problem are vulnerable to developing confusion when unwell. Occasionally people can become very agitated or aggressive and it is important to ask for help if this is the case.

- speak to your doctor or care professional if you are worried somebody has quickly become confused as this is usually a sign of worsening illness
- be reassuring to them, keep explaining who you are and that you are there to help
- try and keep them in the environment they recognise
- ensure adequate lighting, things can be more frightening and disorientating in the dark



Fever : A fever is a temperature above 38C/100

To reduce a fever you can :

- reduce room temperature
- wear loose clothing
- cooling the face by using a cool flannel or cloth
- sip drinks regularly
- avoid alcohol
- portable fans are not recommended for use during outbreaks of infection



A few additional resources for you

This is a 4.5 min long local video below was developed especially for you:

It is accessed via this link- there are 3 videos but this one is the middle one

<https://www.devonprimarycare.com/copy-of-eol-formulary>




Torbay and South Devon
NHS Foundation Trust

COVID-19
Planning Ahead for
Care Homes and
Care Staff



A screenshot of the Devon Primary Care website. At the top left is the Devon Primary Care logo, and at the top right is the NHS logo. Below these is a green navigation bar with links: Home, Care Pathways, Clinical, ITU Considerations, Palliative Care, Patient Information, Clinician Wellbeing, and Localities. A large green box in the center contains the text "Videos for clinicians and patients". Below this are three smaller green boxes with video titles: "BBC-Talking about Dying video", "Video- Planning ahead for Care Homes and Care Staff", and "Video- Discussion with Dr Jo Sykes, Palliative Care Consultant". At the bottom, there is a disclaimer: "Northern Primary Care Collaborative Board East Devon Primary Care Collaborative Board Southern Primary Care Collaborative Board West Devon Primary Care Collaborative Board".

Free access to end of life e learning- new Covid 19 module



e-Learning to enhance education and training for end of life care



<http://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/end-of-life-care/>

There are over 160 modules available including 35 sessions about communication and 19 about ACP with a **new Covid-19 and Palliative, End-of-life and Bereavement Care module**.

Note: For those working in Torbay and South Devon locality this Covid 19 is also available via your Hive account.



Talking to relatives

A guide to compassionate phone communication during COVID-19



Introduce

SPEAK SLOWLY

OPEN WITH A QUESTION

ESTABLISH WHAT THEY KNOW

#hello my name is...
GRACE
WARD SISTER

I'm calling to give you an update on your brother, Frank.

Are you OK to talk right now?

Can you tell me what you know about his condition?

Share info in small chunks



PAUSES
SIMPLE LANGUAGE



EUPHEMISMS
JARGON



Helpful concepts

Honesty with uncertainty

There are treatments that might help Frank get better, such as giving him oxygen to help with his breathing. But if his heart stopped, we wouldn't try to restart it, as this wouldn't work.

Hope for the best, plan for the worst

We hope Frank improves with these treatments, but we're worried he may not recover.

Sick enough to die

Frank is very sick and his body is getting tired. Unfortunately he's now so unwell that he could die in the next hours to days.

I'm so sorry to tell you this over the phone, but sadly Frank died a few minutes ago.

Comfort and reassure



Is there anything you can tell me about Frank to help us look after him? What matters to him?

We've been looking after him and making sure he's comfortable.



Allow silence

LISTEN

EMPATHISE

ACKNOWLEDGE

I am so sorry. Please, take your time.

It must be very hard to take this in, especially over the phone.

I can hear how upset you are. This is an awful situation.

Ending the call

DON'T RUSH

NEXT STEPS

Before I say goodbye, do you have any other questions about Frank?

Do you need any further information or support?

Afterwards

Chat with a colleague. These conversations are hard. #weareallhuman



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Accessed by cut and paste of this website link:

<https://www.bgs.org.uk/resources/covid-19-tools-and-templates#&gid=1&pid=1>