

**ADVICE FOR MANAGEMENT OF SYMPTOMS  
FOR PATIENTS WHO HAVE CORONAVIRUS**



### **Management of Breathlessness**

- Your position in bed or in a chair is important. Try things like sitting upright, uncrossing your legs and keeping your head up. Use pillows to support your upper body, arms and legs. Leaning forward onto pillows stacked on a table can help.
- Use relaxation techniques. There are lots of app and you tube videos that you and your family can use to help.
- Reduce the temperature of your home by opening a window.
- Use a cool, damp cloth to cool your face and wrists.
- Portable fans are not recommended due to the risk of cross infection.
- Your GP can prescribe medication such as morphine liquid and tablets or lorazepam. These medicines can also be given by injection if swallowing is a problem.
- Ensure that if you normally use inhalers or nebulisers that you have a good supply.
- Ask your GP about antibiotics. Sometimes there is more than one infection present and antibiotics can help.

### **Management of Cough**

- Humidify room air. You can do this by using a humidifier, or essential oil burner, or just by putting saucers of water close to sources of heat. Alternatively, if your cough is very dry, you might use a bowl of very hot water (with or without fresh herbs or a few drops of essential oil like lavender, eucalyptus) and inhale steam gently. Please get help and be very careful if carrying hot water.
- Vicks VapoRub or a similar rub might help, if you don't have an allergy to these.
- Try honey and lemon juice in warm water.

- Suck cough drops/hard sweets/menthol lozenges.
- Elevate the head of your bed when sleeping.
- Your GP can prescribe cough linctus or medicine to thin mucus, if hard to cough up.
- Avoid smoking.

### **Management of Fever**

- Reduce room temperature and ventilate by opening window if safe to do so.
- Wear loose clothing.
- Cool face and wrists by using a cool flannel or cloth.
- Avoid the use of fans as these can spread infection.
- Take paracetamol/paracetamol liquid four times a day. If you cannot swallow, your GP can prescribe paracetamol suppositories.
- Ensure that you take fluids very often. Avoidance of dehydration is particularly important. This is particularly important for those with diabetes or those who are taking certain medicines for blood pressure or heart failure (so-called ace inhibitors or angiotensin receptor blockers). Please seek advice about these medicines from your GP if you are finding it hard to drink enough, or have any sickness or vomiting.
- If you use insulin, make sure that you understand your “sick day rules.” Contact your GP or district nurse if uncertain. Do not stop taking your insulin at any time.

### **Management of Pain**

- You may already use pain relief for your underlying condition. Excessive coughing or immobility may cause you to have increased pain. Your hospice team, GP and district nurse will be able to advise you on the management of your pain.

## Management of Confusion

- Some people with COVID can become quite confused and disorientated. Trying to maintain a calm, relaxed environment is important. Familiar and well-loved music and pleasant smells can really help.
- If you are a carer, reassure your loved one and explain everything that you are doing.
- Your GP and nurses can prescribe medication, sometimes given by injection, to help manage these symptoms.
- Sometimes we will suggest the use of a syringe pump or syringe driver to ensure that you are having medication continuously to ensure that your symptoms are managed and that you are free from pain and anxiety. To allow medicine to work quickly, this might involve having a soft line in place in your upper arm.

## Severe weakness/unable to get to the toilet

The Bladder and Bowel UK <https://www.bbuk.org.uk/> has helpful advice. Ask for (1) incontinence pads to absorb urine (avoid sanitary towels as they don't absorb as well as incontinence pads) and for (2) absorbent sheets to put on the bottom sheet to soak up any leaks. It may be that a catheter will be advised by the district nurse to collect urine.

If you cannot get washable or disposable bed pads you can improvise as follows: Lay some large opened rubbish bags over the mattress. Cover them with large bath-towels in a couple of layers, then put the sheet on top.

*Note: This guidance has been prepared by Foyle Hospice in line with the Association for Palliative Medicine (APM) guidance on symptom management for Covid patients*