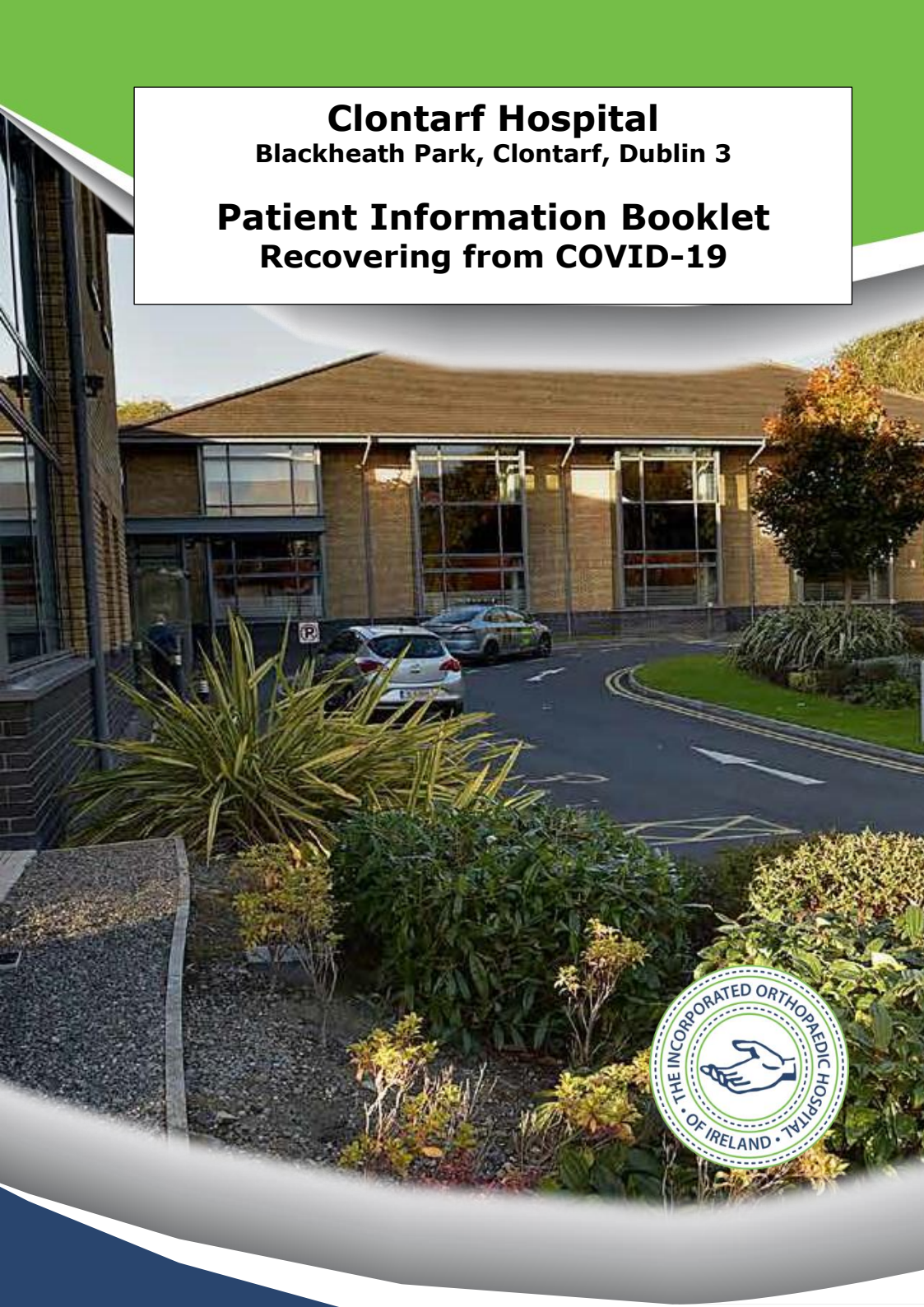


Clontarf Hospital
Blackheath Park, Clontarf, Dublin 3

Patient Information Booklet
Recovering from COVID-19



A Guide for Patients

- This booklet is designed to be an **informative resource** for people after being in hospital with COVID-19.
- It offers some **practical suggestions** for patients on coping with the challenges posed to mind and body after being unwell.
- Recognise that you have been through a **distressing and frightening experience** and that you will have a reaction to it.
- Do not bottle up your feelings. When you feel ready, **talk to someone** who can support and understand you.
- Allow family and friends to **help** you by telling them what you need, such as time out or someone to support you.
- **Set small daily or weekly goals** to achieve, and break them into small steps. This will give you a sense of achievement and confidence.
- Write a list of activities you used to enjoy prior to your hospital admission and aim to gradually start **re-engaging in the activities** you can do right now – and plan out what you might want to do in the future.
- The Staff of Clontarf Hospital prepared this Patient Information booklet drawing on the best information available at the time of writing taken from the HSE and other sources about COVID-19.

Section 1

- **Restricted Movements & Cocooning**
- **Advice for the Carer of a Person returning from hospital after COVID-19**
- **Hygiene in the Home**
- **Personal Hygiene**

Restricted Movements

When you go home from hospital, you should **restrict your movements**. This means;

- avoiding contact with people as much as possible,
- not leaving your home unless it is necessary,
- not using public transport,
- not having visitors in your home,
- not going shopping,
- keeping away from vulnerable people (i.e. older people, anyone with a long-term medical condition and anyone who is pregnant), and
- not travelling outside of Ireland.

Once you are **fourteen days** since the onset of symptoms **with 5 days fever free** or **21 days from the onset of symptoms with no symptoms associated with COVID-19** (except cough as this could last up to 6 weeks), you may follow government advice re Social Isolation and Cocooning.

How to Cocoon

Do

- ✓ **Stay at home** at all times and avoid any close contact with anybody you don't live with,
- ✓ If you have a garden or balcony, **spend time outside** for fresh air if accessibility is safe,
- ✓ **Keep in touch** with family and friends over the phone or online if you have access,
- ✓ Ask neighbours, family or friends to get any **shopping or medicine** you need,
- ✓ Arrange for food or medicine deliveries to be left **outside your door**,
- ✓ Use the **phone** if you need to contact your GP or other services.

Don't

- ✗ Do not **go outside your home** or garden,
- ✗ Do not **have visitors to your home**, except for essential carers,
- ✗ Do not **attend any gatherings** with family and friends.

If you are cocooning but have a carer who visits you

Visits from people who provide essential support with your **daily needs** should continue. These include healthcare, personal support and social care.

When carers visit, they **should wash their hands** when they arrive and often when they are in your home. They should try to **stay 2 metres away** from you, if possible.

If you are cocooning but have someone else living with you

People in your household should;

- **Keep a distance** of at least two metres from you,
- Practice **good hand hygiene** in the home,
- **Minimise** all non-essential **contact** with you,
- Keep **shared rooms** (kitchen, living room) well **ventilated** by keeping windows open,
- Use **one bathroom**, while the rest of your household should use another bathroom where possible. If not, the bathroom should be cleaned after each use.
- **Avoid sharing household items** such as cutlery, crockery, dishes, towels or bed linen.
- **Avoid sharing** any leftover **food or drinks**.
- **Wash** towels, bedlinen, and clothing at the **highest temperature** the material can stand.

Advice for the carer of a person who has come home from hospital after covid-19

- People with COVID-19 are considered able to pass on their infection to others for up to **14 days** after their infection started.

- Your family member may have **less energy** than usual, as they recover from infection and may need some extra support from you after they get home.
- If they need your **support**, you can help by organising grocery shopping or delivery, helping with preparation of meals, organising laundry, housework or cleaning.
- If your family member can look after their own personal care, then you should try to keep a **physical distance** of at least one metre but preferably two meters, from them and use the phone to communicate with each other.
- If your family member cannot look after their personal care, then you may need to have closer contact with them. In those circumstances, both you and your family member should wear a **face mask**.
- Only **one person** should look after the sick person when they come home, if at all possible. This should not be someone who lives with a vulnerable person as previously discussed.
- **Clean your hands** regularly, with regular soap and water and help your family member to do the same.
- Try to **avoid touching your face** and if you do, wash your hands immediately afterwards.
- If you need to help clean phlegm or spit from their face, use a clean tissue, put it into a rubbish bag and wash your hands afterwards.

If you, your family member or housemate becomes unwell:

- **Call the doctor** for advice if the person becomes unwell, especially if they have difficulty breathing.
- If you are caring for an older person, watch out for new onset **confusion**. If they are not usually like this, call the doctor for advice.
- Call the emergency services at 112 or 999 if it is an emergency. Tell them that the person has recently had COVID- 19/coronavirus infection.

Hygiene in the Home

Waste:

- Put all your personal waste in a plastic rubbish bag.
- When the bag is almost full, tie the neck of the bag and then place that bag into a second bin bag and tie this **second bag**.
- Leave this personal rubbish bag somewhere safe for **three days**, and then the bag can be left out for collection by the waste removal company.
- Other household waste can be left out for collection without any delay, as this waste is not a risk for passing on COVID-19.

Cleaning:

- **Clean surfaces** in the home with your usual cleaning products every day. This includes door knobs, banisters, toilets, keyboards, phones etc.

- Use your **usual household products** as these are excellent at removing the virus.
- Wear household or rubber **gloves** when cleaning surfaces or handling dirty laundry.
- Wash and dry the gloves after use. Wash and dry your hands carefully after the gloves are removed.
- Wash reusable cleaning cloths in a hot wash cycle after use as heat kills the virus.
- Put disposable gloves and cleaning cloths in a plastic waste bag after use.

Hand Washing

Do

- ✓ Wash your hands **regularly**
- ✓ Wet your hands with water and **apply soap**
- ✓ Rub your hands together until the soap forms a lather
- ✓ Rub the top of your hands, between your fingers and under your fingernails for about **20 seconds**
- ✓ Rinse your hands under running water
- ✓ **Dry your hands** with a clean towel or paper towel
- ✓ Use hand sanitiser if soap and water not available
- ✓ If you cough or sneeze cover your mouth and nose with your sleeve (in the middle of your arm) or a tissue
- ✓ Discard any used tissues immediately and wash your hands

Don't

- ✗ Don't touch any part of your face if your hands are not clean

Section 2

- **Fatigue & Sleep Problems**
- **Physical Function**
- **Eating well in Recovery**
- **Anxiety**
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**
- **Tips to manage Anxiety and PTSD**
- **Sleep Tips**
- **Calm and Mindful Breathing Guidance**
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation Guidance**
- **Community and Financial Supports**

Fatigue & Sleep Problems

Fatigue appears to be a common symptom-affecting people who have been in hospital with COVID-19. You may feel very tired very quickly, even if you are not doing much physical activity within your day.

Your tolerance for physical exercise may have reduced significantly, and you may not be able to complete daily tasks you could prior to your hospital admission. You may find that sleep does not 'recharge' you as it usually would. Mental fatigue is also common and you may find yourself feeling more tired than usual when doing simple day-to-day activities.

When trying to manage your fatigue you can use the four 'P's to help.

1. Problem Solving

Often it is not what you are doing, it is the way you are doing it that can increase fatigue. Ask yourself is there an easier way you could complete this task (.i.e. from a sitting position or with a small amount of assistance).

2. Planning

Make a list of your weekly tasks and make sure the demanding tasks (.i.e. showering) are spaced out throughout the week.

3. Prioritising

Once you have a list of your weekly tasks put them in order of importance and decide what tasks can wait until the next day if you become too fatigued to finish your list. Ask yourself these questions:

- Does it need to be done today?
- Does it need to be done by myself or can someone else help?

4. Pacing

Gradually increase your activity levels without using up too much energy in one go. You should maintain an even level of activity throughout the day instead of exhausting yourself in the morning by completing all your tasks, causing you to have to rest for the rest of the afternoon.

Take frequent short breaks

- Do something for a set time

- 'Taking a break' does not mean stopping completely
- Change your position or do something else for a short while

Gradually increase the amount you do

- Gradually build up the amount you do
- 'Pace up' by a set amount
- Do not be tempted to try to do more on a 'good day' stick to pacing levels

Physical Function

Whilst in hospital, most people are less active than they would usually be. Prolonged periods of inactivity can lead to muscle loss and de-conditioning. As a result, you may experience:

- Weakness
- Joint Stiffness
- Muscle Tightness
- A sensation of feeling unsteady on your feet
- Reduced exercise tolerance

This is normal; however, it is important to stay as active as possible, even throughout the course of your illness. Being active and avoiding prolonged periods of bed-rest, can facilitate a quicker recovery both physically and mentally.





Things that can help you get stronger:

- Whilst in hospital, you may initially require assistance with your daily needs. However, you will be encouraged to try and do what you can for yourself, such as washing, dressing and feeding (these are what we call functional activities).
- Getting into a daily routine, including times of rest and times of activity.
- You are encouraged to complete exercises that you can do by yourself.

Eating well in Recovery

A change in appetite is very common during periods of illness. You may have a reduced appetite, experience changes in taste or smell or you may not want to eat at all. Without forcing yourself to eat, it is very important to try to eat small amounts regularly, to avoid further weight loss and delay recovery.

Returning to or maintaining a healthy weight is the main nutritional priority when recovering from illness and regaining your strength. The following tips can help you get more calories and protein from the foods you try to eat:

Eat little and often

- Try to eat something every 2-3 hours and avoid long gaps between eating.

- Avoid large platefuls of food if you find it puts you off eating. Eat small nourishing portions.
- Aim for three small meals as well as two to three snacks every day. Include desserts
- Make these snacks high in calories and protein. You can eat less food on your plate but it is more nutritious.
- Aim to have 1 pint of full fat milk per day or even better make fortified milk (recipe overleaf)
- Drink at least 6 cups of fluids each day after or between meals. Be careful not to fill up on drinks such as tea, coffee, Bovril or packet soups that do not contain much nourishment between meals.
- Limit fibre (brown bread, cereals, etc.) as it fills you up quickly.
- Avoid low calorie, 'light', low-fat, reduced fat, reduced sugar and 'diet' foods.

Foods to try

Snack ideas

- Cheddar or soft cheese with 2 cream crackers.
- A slice of banana bread and butter
- Half a scone with butter and jam or cream
- Madeira Cake
- Ready- made pots of yoghurts and milky pudding likes custards, ambrosia rice tubs.

Light meals

- A small tin of beans, or egg or cheese or tinned fish or cold meats on 1 slice of toast with butter.
- Small portions of main meals e.g. 1 scoop of mash with butter, 1 slice of meat, vegetables and gravy.

Desserts

- Ready – made trifle pots, custards, ambrosia rice, crème caramel, Ice cream.
- When your weight is stable, your dietitian will be able to advise you on returning to a healthy eating diet.

For further menu ideas, refer to Making the Most of Every Bite – a 222 page full colour cookbook, or download from www.hse.ie/nutritionsupports

Anxiety

- Anxiety is a very normal reaction following COVID-19.
- These feelings can affect your engagement in rehabilitation, your sleeping pattern and your daily life when discharged home.
- Anxiety can make your heart race; make you feel sweaty, shaky and increased shortness of breath. It can also bring changes in your behaviour including being overly cautious, avoiding things or feeling more irritable than usual.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- PTSD is an anxiety disorder caused by very stressful or frightening events.
- A person with PTSD often relives the experience through nightmares, repetitive mental images and flashbacks. People with PTSD may also experience

physical symptoms such as feeling sick or sweating.

- If you feel you require emotional support or input please contact your GP.

Tips to manage Anxiety and PTSD

Enjoyable Activities

Do something you enjoy! This could be listening to music, reading a book, sitting in the garden if safe to do so, painting or phoning a family member/friend.

Guided Imagery

Try to mentally visualise a place in your life that represents safety, happiness and comfort. This could be the beach, a favourite holiday destination, your childhood home, a family member's house or the garden.

Relaxation

This involves closing your eyes and listening to sounds or music. These can include your favourite piece of relaxing music or sounds such as birds or rain/waves splashing.

Sleep tips



Go to bed and wake up at the same time



Create a calm space (consider lighting, temperature, comfort of pillows and mattress and electronics)



Use your bed for sleeping only, try to avoid sitting or lying in bed during the day



Try not to exercise too close to bedtime



Try to avoid taking naps during the day unless you are unwell



Avoid caffeine



Try to avoid checking the clock

Calm and Mindful Breathing Guidance

When we are anxious, our breathing often changes. We can begin to gulp air quickly, thinking that we are going to suffocate. This has the effect of making us feel dizzy, faint, sickly or anxious. It is not harmful or dangerous but it can feel unpleasant. To relax your breathing, take smooth, slow and regular breaths to regulate the amount of oxygen you take in. Sitting upright is usually better than lying down or slouching, because it can increase the capacity of your lungs to fill with air.

- Take a slow breath in through the nose, feeling your belly rise as you breathe in for a count of two (1...2...)
- Hold your breath for one or two seconds
- Exhale slowly through the mouth for a count of four (1...2...3...4...)
- Wait a few seconds before taking another breath

You do not need to feel anxious to practice-in fact, at first you should practice while feeling relatively calm to give yourself opportunity to practice.

Try calm breathing at least five minutes twice a day, or whenever you notice yourself getting anxious. As you relax your breathing, you might notice your thoughts wandering. The aim is concentrate our attention only on what is happening in the here and now, not the past or the future. As thoughts come into your mind, simply notice them and then bring your attention back to your breathing.

You do not have to follow those thoughts or feelings, do not judge yourself for having them, or analyse them in any way. It is okay for the thought to be there and for your attention to wander. Just notice when this happens and let the thoughts drift on by, each time bringing your attention back to your breathing

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Guidance

Sit in a comfortable chair (or lie on the floor or on a bed). Ensure you will not be disturbed by other noises. If you become aware of sounds – just try to ignore them and let them leave your mind just as soon as they enter. Make sure the whole of your body is comfortably supported – including your arms, head and feet.

Close your eyes. Feel the chair supporting your whole body – your legs, your arms, and your bed. If you feel any tension, begin to let it go. Take two slow and deep breaths and let your tension begin to flow out.

Become aware of your head – notice how your forehead feels. Let any tension go and feel your forehead become smooth and wide. Let any tension go from around your eyes, your mouth, your cheeks and your jaw. Let your teeth part slightly and feel the tension go.

Now focus on your neck – let the chair take the weight of your head and feel your neck relax. Now your head is feeling heavy and floppy. Let your shoulders lower gently down. Your shoulders are wider, your neck is longer. Notice how your body feels as you begin to relax.

Be aware of your arms and your hands. Let them sink down into the chair. Now they are feeling heavy and limp. Think about your back – from your neck to your hips. Let the tension go and feel yourself sinking down into the chair. Let your hips, your legs and your feet relax and roll outwards. Notice the feeling of relaxation taking over.

Notice your breathing – your abdomen gently rising and falling as you breathe. Let your next breath be a little deeper, a little slower. Now you are feeling completely relaxed and heavy. Lie still and concentrate on slow, rhythmic breathing.

When you want to, count back from five to one and open your eyes. Wiggle your fingers and toes, breathe deeply and stretch. Look around the room, becoming more alert as you notice what you see, hear and feel. Pause before gently rising.

Community Supports Covid-19 Support Helpline

8 am-8 pm Monday - Sunday: 0818 222 024

This line can offer the following assistance:

- Shopping for food, fuel etc.
- Transport to medical appointments
- Delivery of hot meals
- Collection of prescribed medicines
- Social Supports
- Garda related matters

Dublin Supermarkets Priority Times for Older Persons

- Dunnes Stores: 11 am – 1pm daily
- Aldi: 11 am – 1pm daily
- Lidl: 9 am – 11 am
- Tesco: Monday, Wednesday & Friday until 9 am
- SuperValu: As some SuperValu stores are individually owned and operated there are various times for these.

Telephone - Vodafone

Vodafone have launched a new Tech Advice/Smart Phone Support Line for older people.

01-8731166

Open Mon - Fri 9 am to 6 pm

Pharmacies

- Your GP can now send prescriptions to pharmacies by email. This means that you may not need to go to your GP surgery if you need a prescription for medication.
- If you have a prescription that needs to be renewed, your local pharmacy can do this for you in most cases.
- If you cannot go to the pharmacy, you can contact the local community support number **0818 222 024**.

Looking after your Mental Health

- **Aware:** Supporting Light through Depression
Phone: **1800 80 48 48**
- **The Samaritans:** If you need a response immediately, it is best to call on the phone. This number is **FREE** to call.
Phone: **116 123**
- **Pieta House:** Provides free therapy to those engaging in self-harm, with suicidal ideation, or bereaved by suicide. This number is **FREE** to call.
Phone: **1800 247 247**

Financial Supports

- **Community Welfare Office:** For Exceptional Needs Payments/Supplementary Welfare Allowance, you can contact your local community welfare office as above.
Phone: **1890 800 024**
- **St Vincent De Paul:** practical help and advice, friendly ear.
Phone: **01 8848200**
- **Sage Advocacy:** Support and advocacy service for vulnerable adults, older people and healthcare patients.
Phone: **1850 71 94 00**
- **Men's Aid:** Men's Aid Ireland formerly known as Amen, is the only dedicated national service supporting men and their families experiencing Domestic Violence in Ireland.
Phone: **01-5543811** or **01-5394277**
- **Women's Aid:** Women's Aid 24 hr National Freephone Helpline: **1800 341 900**
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Clontarf Hospital Website www.ioh.ie
Follow Clontarf Hospital on Twitter [@IOHClontarf](https://twitter.com/IOHClontarf)

