

Self-care and COVID-19 anxiety

COVID-19, lockdowns, their implications and outcomes have taken a heavy toll on many people's mental wellbeing.

Whilst seeking professional help through your GP or occupational health provider if you feel concerned is very wise, there are steps you can take yourself to ease your worries during these trying times.

They are simple, yet vital, things you can do to help you deal with life on life's terms.



Welcome back!

Now that things are opening up, you may be able to see more friends and family, get that haircut or eat out. You may also be very anxious about spreading or catching COVID-19. Tips:

- If you have symptoms, you should isolate and speak with your GP
- Make sure you get your vaccinations when offered
- Maintain social distancing: even with your vaccinations, you may still get COVID-19 but, hopefully, not such a serious version. However, there are also those out there who may not be vaccinated or whose immune systems are not as good as yours
- So **be kind and be safe**

- Continue hand hygiene and wearing a mask, at least where required
- You can wear a mask anywhere even if there is no law mandating it. That is your right and **if it makes you feel safer, then do so.**

Look after your body and it will look after you

Eating a healthy, balanced diet can keep you on point and your body's immune system better able to cope with the virus (and other illnesses). Tips:

- Try to eat your five fruit and vegetables a day
- Eat a wide variety of food and drink in the right proportions. This can also help maintain a healthy body weight
- Check these sites out for tips to make it manageable (and delicious):

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/>

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Get outside and exercise

The benefits of using nature to improve your mental health are clear. Tips include:

- Get outside for a walk each lunchtime
- Exercise outside whenever you can, whether it's a run, cycle or walk
- Try to make a habit, each day, of connecting with nature
- Stop to listen to the birdsong, smell the freshly cut grass, take care of a house plant, notice any trees, flowers or animals nearby.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/nature-and-mental-health/how-nature-benefits-mental-health/>

For more information, contact your occupational health team.

Stick with a schedule

If you are on your own - or surrounded by others requiring your time - try to create a schedule that includes some "me time":

- First, put in all the "must dos"
- Then add in basic activities like meals, walking the dog, cleaning, etc
- Create a list of free-time activities you would like to do and slot these in - and do them!

Get a good sleep

If you have difficulty falling asleep, a regular bedtime routine will help you wind down and prepare for bed. Good tips:

- Stick to a consistent wake-up time
- Stay active during the day
- Set alarms to remind yourself to get up and move
- Avoid screens for at least 30 minutes before bed. This will limit exposure to blue light and to stress-triggering news stories, which can stir up anxiety and worry
- Find your favourite wind-down activity, such as reading a book, doing gentle stretches or listening to pleasant music.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/>

Talk to people about how you feel

You may be surprised to find that many feel the same way you do. Tips:

- Try to put things into perspective so that worries do not run away with you
- What are the things that you CAN control in life?
- The concept of mindfulness is useful in this context. Right here, right now I am OK
- Don't let worries run away with you.

If you don't have anyone to talk to, try the Samaritans:

<https://www.samaritans.org/>

Keep a journal

A diary can help you form your thoughts and look at them to see if they are realistic:

- Is my thought real?
- Is there a valid reason for this?
- Does it make sense?

By writing your thoughts down and reviewing them, you can put some worries out of the way if they are just that - worries without a valid reason. And if they are valid, talk to someone about them, if you cannot solve them constructively yourself.

Check your habits

Have they changed during lockdown? Are you drinking, eating, cleaning, gambling much more than before? Do people comment on this or raise concerns? Are these habits affecting the way you live?

If so, talk to your GP or occupational health provider, if you want to change things. There are some great support groups:

Alcohol: <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/>

Drugs: <https://ukna.org/>

Gambling: <https://www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk/>

Overeating: <https://www.oagb.org.uk/>

OCD: [http://www.](http://www.obsessivecompulsiveanonymous.org.uk/)

[obsessivecompulsiveanonymous.org.uk/](http://www.obsessivecompulsiveanonymous.org.uk/)



Most of all, **remember to have fun**. The sun still rises and sets. The world still turns. You are still here. Eat right, sleep well, take care of yourself and try to enjoy the now.