

MENTAL HEALTH AND COVID-19

Managing your psychological health is as important as your physical health. You may be feeling a range of emotions at this time. Taking care of your basic needs and employing helpful coping strategies are top priorities. It is likely that this will be a 'new normal' for a while and there are things you can do to support your wellbeing.

There are times when our psychological wellbeing is so challenged that self-care is not enough. If you are finding things difficult, consider talking to your GP or contact some of the organisations show here.

Daily Routine

Keep a routine: this doesn't have to be the same as your usual routine, but having structure to the day is helpful.

Get some sunlight and fresh air: this might be going for a walk (ensuring you stay away from others), spending time in the garden, or opening windows and doors.

Think of ways to spend your time: take the opportunity to clear tasks that you've been meaning to do for ages, or maybe leisure activities such as puzzles, books, crafts, writing or yoga.

Lifestyle

Think about your diet: it is easy to snack often or not cook properly. Take time to plan healthy meals and eat sensibly.

Drink water regularly: a change in routine can affect how often you drink. Set reminders if needed.

Watch your alcohol intake: with working hours changing, and no commute, having a drink can seem easier. Avoid drinking beyond government recommendations (14 units/week, over 3 or more days) and remember that alcohol negatively affects quality sleep and will lower your mood.

Exercise: released endorphins which lift your mood. There are plenty of online or app-based exercise programmes, e.g. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/> .

"I live alone and I have diabetes and asthma. I know that this puts me at higher risk so I am staying at home nearly all the time. My clubs have been cancelled and no-one can come and visit. It's very lonely."

"I already have mental health problems and this is making them lots worse. The support I normally get isn't there, and I'm finding it hard to cope."

**How do you feel?
It's OK to
not be OK.
You are not alone.**

"I feel anxious all the time. Scared to go out, worried that something will happen to the people I care about, and I can't see my family or friends. It's hard."

"I miss my grandchildren so much. They're growing up fast and I don't know when I'll see them again. I feel like I'm missing out and it's really upsetting."

Stay in Touch

Lack of social contact is one of the hardest things, especially if you live alone. Keep in touch digitally or by phone. Some people have been using video calls to play games, have a meal 'together' and watch films at the same time. Be imaginative!

Talking is important. Just a quick check in with 'How are you?' helps people feel less alone. If you can, check on vulnerable people more often.

Although useful, media coverage can increase worry and be overwhelming. Try limiting to one or two reliable sources of information, such as www.gov.uk. Turning off notifications and having defined time to engage in social media can be helpful.

There are Positives

It may be easy to see the downsides to the situation, but trying to think of the good things and reframing it into opportunities is helpful. Some people are not finding it as hard as others – that's OK too. Here are some examples:

"I like the way that it has brought communities together. Seeing everyone out clapping on a Thursday does lift my spirits."

"I've had to learn how to use new technology. I was scared of it at first, but it wasn't as hard as I thought and now I can keep in touch with even more people than I could before!"

**How do you feel?
It's OK to be OK.**

"It's nice not to have a commute. It's also more peaceful with less traffic noise."

"My employer has found new ways for us to work, and I think this will make life easier in the future too."

"Only being able to go out for essentials and to exercise has done me good. I've now got into a routine where I have a brisk walk for an hour every day and I feel better for it."

Support is Available

GP Surgery

Mental health is just as important as physical health. If you are feeling overwhelmed, call your practice. Your team can discuss your needs, and make a plan with you as to how to help you best. Practices also have a team of people available to support you if you're feeling worried, lonely or isolated. Please ask – it's not a bother.

Fareham Mind Wellbeing Centre – They offer private and confidential emotional support. Give them a call on 01329 281445, or email adminfg@solentmind.org.uk. More information is on their website at <https://www.solentmind.org.uk/our-services/wellbeing-services/>

italk – for people who are keen to take a psychological approach to their mental health recover, italk is a free service for Hampshire patients. You can refer yourself by phone on 02380 383920, by email on info@italk.org.uk or online using the orange 'Self-Referral' button on the website www.italk.org.uk.

SilverCloud is an online psychological therapy programme which will offer you 24/7 secure, convenient access to online CBT programmes tailored to meet your specific needs, with support from one of the italk practitioners. This is the signup link: <https://italk.silvercloudhealth.com/signup/>

Connect to Support Hampshire – this website is a link to the most comprehensive directory of support and services for all sorts of areas that might be a challenge in your life – not just mental health. <https://www.connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk/>

In a Crisis

If someone is in immediate danger, call 999. There is now a specialist mental health practitioner within the 111 service in our area. If you are struggling, you can call 111 and they will put you in touch swiftly. During surgery hours (0800-1830) you can call explain that you need to see the duty team because you have a mental health crisis. Please do not be afraid to use an emergency appointment for a mental health crisis.

Samaritans – Freephone 116 123 (open 24/7). If you don't feel up to talking to someone, then you can email them on jo@samaritans.org but they can take up to 24h to get back to you.

Shout is a crisis text line available 24/7. Text 85258. <https://www.giveusashout.org>

SANE – 0300 304 7000. This charity offers emotional support between 1630-2230 every day

StayingSafe.net is a website which is focused on helping people in crisis, with lots of support to help you through the most difficult times.

Papyrus urgent support for young people under 35. Weekdays 0900-2200 and weekends 1400-2200. Call HopelineUK on 0800 068 41 41 or text 07786 209697. <https://papyrus-uk.org/>

CALM – 0800 58 58 58 1700-0000 or web chat. <https://www.thecalmzone.net/help/get-help/>

Other Support

Mind – this charity offers an information line about mental health conditions, where to get help, treatment options and advocacy services. 0300 123 3393, also via text 86463 or email info@mind.org.uk You can also get more information on their website at www.mind.org.uk

Cruse – this organisation specifically offers support for bereavement. The number is 0808 808 1677. You can also get help from their website on <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help>

Relate – where there are relationship issues, Relate may be able to help. Contact 02392 827026 or appointments.hampshire@relate.org.uk

Citizens Advice - advice can be sought online at or you can contact Fareham Citizen's Advice at admin@citafareham.org or 03444 111 306. They cover a wide variety of issues.

Every Mind Matters – advice on how to look after your mental health, including a free action plan. <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

Domestic Abuse – for women/children: <https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/>
for men: <https://mensadviceline.org.uk/>