



**Interior Health**  
*Every person matters*

## **COVID-19 Guide to Home-based Health & Wellness**

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## Useful Links

### BC Centre for Disease Control

[www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19)

### Interior Health – COVID information

<https://news.interiorhealth.ca/covid-19/>

### HealthLinkBC

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca>

Call 8-1-1

### BC COVID-19 Support smartphone app

<https://bc.thrive.health/covid19app>

### World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

### Home activity program handouts

Level 1 (Sitting): <https://www.interiorhealth.ca/Forms/821142.pdf>

Level 2 (Standing): <https://www.interiorhealth.ca/Forms/821143.pdf>

Level 3 (Moving): <https://www.interiorhealth.ca/Forms/821144.pdf>

Videos of all exercises: [www.findingbalancebc.ca/exercise/sail-home-activity-program/](http://www.findingbalancebc.ca/exercise/sail-home-activity-program/)

### Breathing exercise handouts

<https://vch.eduhealth.ca/PDFs/FN/FN.510.B74.pdf>

<https://vch.eduhealth.ca/PDFs/FN/FN.200.P741.pdf>

<https://vch.eduhealth.ca/PDFs/FN/FN.510.L58.pdf>

### Mental health supports

<https://cmha.ca/news/covid-19-and-mental-health>

[www.crisiscentreat.ca](http://www.crisiscentreat.ca)

<https://keltymentalhealth.ca>

<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourCare/MentalHealthSubstanceUse/MentalHealth/Pages/default.aspx>

## Introduction to the Guide

This guide is to help with the transition to home-based activity after being in hospital with COVID-19, or if you are self-isolating at home with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. The guide is intended for a wide audience and is not intended to replace specific medical advice that you have been given.

COVID-19 may have impacts on your breathing, strength, mobility, and mental health. If you have had severe disease requiring admission to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), recovery may be slower and more prolonged.

Please contact your Community Care team or your doctor with any questions or concerns. You can also call HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1 any time to talk to a nurse about how you are feeling and get some help.

**If you have any new, recurrent or worsening of symptoms – such as fever, increased shortness of breath, or chest pain – please contact your health-care provider or call 9-1-1 without delay.**

## About My Journey with COVID-19

Date my illness/symptoms started:

---

My date of discharge from hospital:

---

I will be in self-isolation until **(a member of the Public Health team will contact me)**:

---

Reasons to contact my health-care provider or return to the hospital are:

---

**Please wash clothing and any personal items upon returning home from hospital.**

The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health-care team.  
*Adapted from VCH & Providence Health Care COVID-19 Home-based Activity Guide*

## COVID-19 General Information

### What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found mostly in animals. In humans, they can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The disease caused by the new coronavirus has been named COVID-19.

We don't know a lot about COVID-19 yet. Some people have become very sick, but others have not.

This virus spreads to other people when the person that has it coughs or sneezes. These droplets can enter eyes, nose or throat if you are closer than two metres from a person who has the virus.

The virus is not spread by particles floating in the air and it can't come in through the skin.

It can be spread by touching people and objects if a person has used their hands to cover their mouth or nose when they cough. It is best to cough or sneeze into your arm and wash your hands regularly.

### Symptoms of a COVID-19 Infection

COVID-19 can appear up to 14 days after being exposed to the virus.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are usually similar to the flu and common cold. They include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Loss of sense of smell
- Difficulty concentrating
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue

Other rare symptoms have been reported including heart, neurological, and circulation changes. However, if you have been asked to continue your journey at home, you have been assessed as safe to do so. Let your doctor know or call 9-1-1 if your symptoms change significantly. Most people have mild symptoms and are able to recover safely at home. This guide was created by rehabilitation doctors, respiratory therapists, and other therapists. The intent is to help you get stronger and recover. We are here to support you – you can do it!

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## Exercise and Activity

### For People Recovering from COVID-19 at Home

These are general recommendations. Please follow all instructions from your health-care provider.

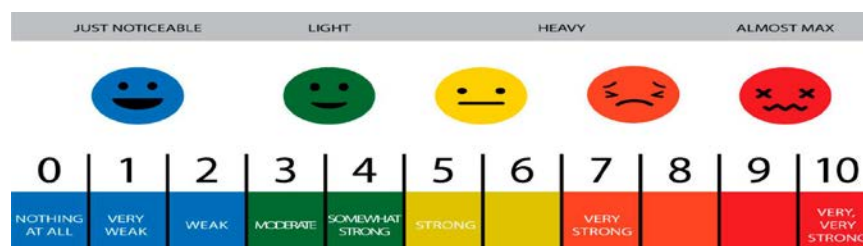
Your body is recovering from a serious illness. It may take some time to get back to “normal”, but with time and gentle activity you will get there!

#### Rest:

- Rest is important for your recovery. Your body does its healing when you are resting.
- Try to get at least eight hours of sleep each night and take naps if you need to.

#### Exercise:

- Exercise helps build your strength, improves your circulation, and generally makes you feel better.
- Exercise is shown to improve your lung function and reduce muscle pains. Specific lung exercises are included. You will be able to do more as you build your strength over time.
- **If your health-care provider has said you can go outside for walks:**
  - Start on a progressive daily walking program.
  - Begin on a flat surface with no hills and record the distance or the time that you walk. Gradually increase the distance or time that you are walking each day (by 10 to 15 per cent), and slowly add in uneven surfaces and hills.
  - We recommend that you do several short walks a day with rests in between, instead of one long walk, to avoid fatigue and discomfort.
  - Keep two metres from other people, wear a mask if advised, and wash your hands before and after your walk. Follow your health -care provider’s instructions.
- For six to eight weeks:
  - Be careful not to tire yourself out. Slowly increase your activity. Listen to your body. It will tell you if you are doing too much too soon.
  - On a scale of one to 10, keep your exercise near three.



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## Mobility and Balance Exercises



Strategies and Actions for Independent Living®

### SAIL® Home Activity Program – Level 1: Sitting

Do only the activities you feel safe and comfortable doing.

- Sit tall through all the activities, preferably in a firm chair with armrests.
- Keep breathing normally. Do not hold your breath.
- Hold means hold position for 3 seconds (count “thousand 1, thousand 2, thousand 3”).
- Begin with a few of the activities but do them several times each day.
- Add more activities until you are doing all of them.
- Over time, do more of each activity, up to 15 times
  - If any of these activities add to your pain or shortness of breath, stop and rest.
  - Do less another day. Talk with your doctor or other health care professional.

#### 1. Toe and Heel Lifts

- Lift toes of both feet as high as you can (keep heels on floor). Hold. Relax. Do 2-3 more times.
- Lift heels of both feet up together (keep toes on floor). Hold. Relax. Do 2-3 more times.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Lift toes of one foot while lifting heel of other foot. Switch.



#### 2. Marching on the Spot

March on the spot, raising each knee high. Continue for 5-10 seconds. Rest. Repeat. Rest.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Slowly do for longer (up to 2 minutes without resting).



These activities are part of the Strategies and Actions for Independent Living Program (2012) - BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit.

May 2013



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## SAIL® Home Activity Program – Level 1: Sitting

### 3. Arm Raises and Breathing Activity

- Rest hands on sides of lower rib cage. Keep shoulders relaxed. Breathe in through your nose. Feel your lower ribs move out. Breathe slowly out through your mouth. Feel your rib cage relax. Do 3-4 more times.
- Now, clasp hands together. Breathe as you lift arms up (only as high as comfortable). Breathe as you lower your arms. Do 3-4 more times.



### 4. Letters in the Air

- Make a letter "A" in air with one leg. Rest. Do the same with the other leg. Rest.
- Make a letter "B" in air with one leg. Rest. Do the same with the other leg. Rest.

Too easy?

- Do more letters.
- Do several letters in a row with same leg.
- Make bigger letters in the air.



### 5. Tap Dancing

- Tap one heel forward and return, sideways and return. Do the same with other foot. Do 2-3 more times.
- Tap once with one heel, then once with other heel. Do 2 - 3 more times.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more or do it faster.
- Hold one or two arms up while tapping heels.
- Add fun brain activities while tapping heels.
  - Say the days of the week forward then backward.
  - Count backwards by 3 from 100.



These activities are part of the Strategies and Actions for Independent Living Program (2012) - BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit.

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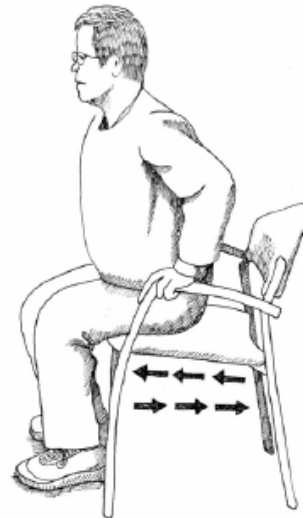
## SAIL® Home Activity Program – Level 1: Sitting

### 6. Buttock Walk

Lift and shift one buttock forward, then other buttock forward (scooting) in chair. Do the same going backward. Do 2-3 more times.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Hold one or two arms out to side.
- Sing a song or recite a poem while doing



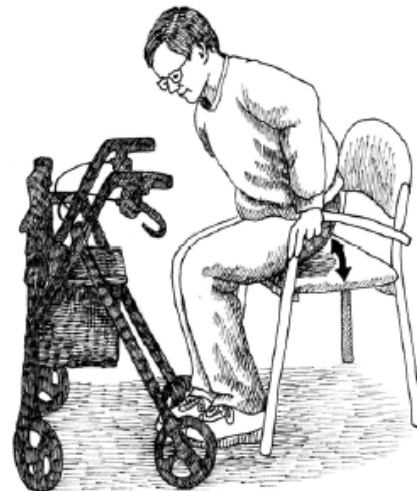
### 7. Buttock Lifts

a) Sit closer to the front of the chair, with your feet close to the chair and apart. Put your hands on armrests of chair. Lean forward, nose over toes. Push heels into floor as if going to stand. Hold. Relax. Do 2-3 more times.

b) Now, lift buttocks up off chair slightly. Feel the weight through your feet. Sit back down. Relax. Do 2-3 more times.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.



These activities are part of the Strategies and Actions for Independent Living Program (2012) - BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit.

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## Level 2: Standing - SAIL® Home Activity Program

Do only the activities you feel safe and comfortable doing.

- Stand tall through all the activities, feet shoulder width apart.
- Keep breathing normally. Do not hold your breath.
- Hold means hold position for 3 seconds (count "thousand 1, thousand 2, thousand 3").
- Begin with a few of the activities but do them several times each day
- Add more activities until you are doing all of them.
- Over time, do more of each activity, up to 15 times..
- Over time, hold on less to the sink or counter.
  - Hold on with one hand and only a few fingers of the other hand.
  - Hold on with just a few fingers of each hand.
  - Hold on with only one hand.
  - Hold on with just a few fingers of one hand.
  - Keep hands close to the sink or counter but don't hold on unless you need to.

If any of these activities add to your pain or shortness of breath, stop and rest.  
Do less another day. Talk with your doctor or other health care professional.

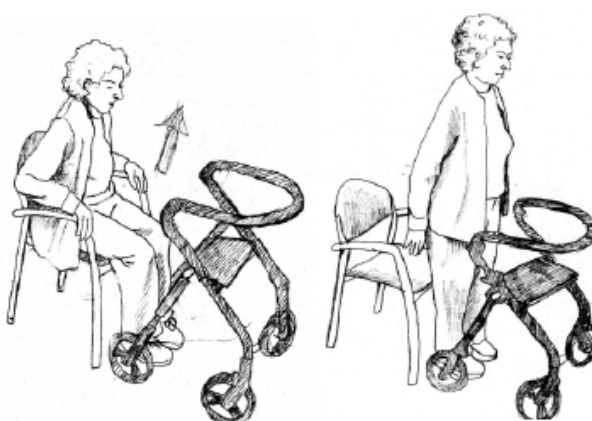
### 1. Sit to Stand

Sit tall in a firm chair with armrests. Put your walker in front of you and lock the brakes. Sit closer to the front of the chair with your feet close to the chair and apart.

Put your hands on armrests of chair. Lean forward, nose over toes, feeling the weight through your feet. Stand up. Stand for a few seconds (if needed, hold onto the walker). Reach back for the armrests of the chair and slowly sit down. Stand up 2-3 more times.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Use your arms less.

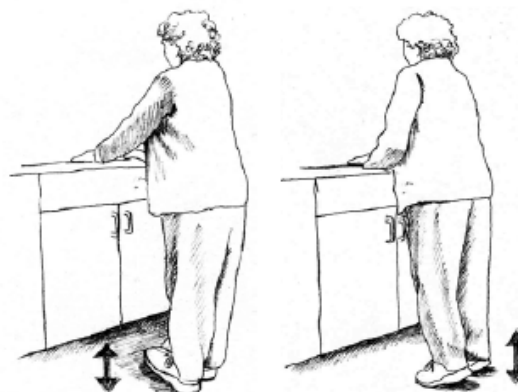


### 2. Toe Taps and Up on Toes

- Stand tall facing the sink. Hold on with both hands. With one foot, keep heel on floor and lift toes up. Hold. Relax. Do with the other foot. Do 2-3 more times.
- Go up on toes with both feet. Relax. Do 2-3 more times.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Lift up toes of both feet together. Do NOT lean back.
- Alternate with going up on toes.
- Slowly hold on less to the sink or counter.



These activities are part of the Strategies and Actions for Independent Living Program (2012) - BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit.

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## Level 2: Standing - SAIL® Home Activity Program

### 3. Marching on the Spot

Stand tall facing the sink. Hold on with both hands. March on the spot for 10 seconds. Rest. Repeat.

Too easy?

- Slowly do for longer – up to 2 minutes.
- Raise your knees higher.
- Slowly hold on less to the sink or counter.

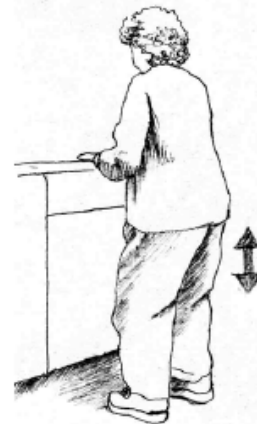


### 4. Mini Squats

Stand tall facing the sink with feet shoulder width apart. Hold on with both hands. Push hips back and bend knees slightly as if starting to sit down. Do not bend knees so far that your knees go past your toes. Hold. Straighten up tall. Repeat 2-3 times.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Slowly hold on less to the sink or counter.



### 5. Alternate Leg Out and In

Stand tall facing the sink. Hold on with both hands. Keeping toes pointed forward, lift leg slightly out to side. Hold. Don't move upper body. Return to starting position. Do with other leg. Repeat 2-3 times.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Slowly hold on less to the sink or counter.



These activities are part of the Strategies and Actions for Independent Living

ion Unit.

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## Level 2: Standing - SAIL® Home Activity Program

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Too easy?

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- Raise your knees higher.
- Slowly hold on less to the sink or counter.

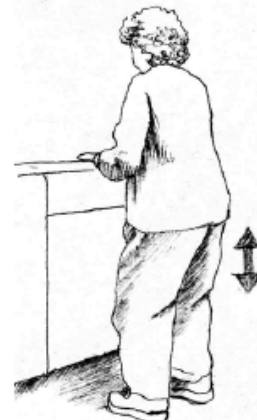


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Stand tall facing the sink with feet shoulder width apart. Hold on with both hands. Push hips back and bend knees slightly as if starting to sit down. Do not bend knees so far that your knees go past your toes. Hold. Straighten up tall. Repeat 2-3 times.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Slowly hold on less to the sink or counter.



### 5. Alternate Leg Out and In

Stand tall facing the sink. Hold on with both hands. Keeping toes pointed forward, lift leg slightly out to side. Hold. Don't move upper body. Return to starting position. Do with other leg. Repeat 2-3 times.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Slowly hold on less to the sink or counter.



These activities are part of the Strategies and Actions for Independent Living

ion Unit.

May 2013





Strategies and Actions for Independent Living®

## Level 3: Moving - SAIL® Home Activity Program

Do only the activities you feel safe and comfortable doing.

- Stand tall through all the activities, feet shoulder width apart.
- Keep breathing normally. Do not hold your breath.
- Hold means hold position for 3 seconds (count "thousand 1, thousand 2, thousand 3").
- Begin with a few of the activities but do them several times each day.
- Add more activities until you are doing all of them.
- Over time, hold on less to the sink or counter.
- Hold on with one hand and only a few fingers of the other hand.
- Hold on with just a few fingers of each hand.
- Hold on with only one hand.
- Hold on with just a few fingers of one hand.
- Keep hands close to the sink or counter but don't hold on unless you need to.
- Over time, do more of each activity, up to 15 times.

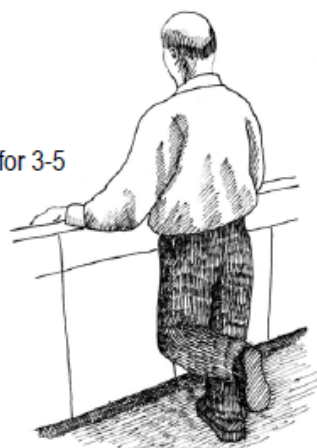
If any of these activities add to your pain or shortness of breath, stop and rest.  
Do less another day. Talk with your doctor or other health care professional.

### 1. Standing on One Leg

Stand tall facing sink. Hold on with both hands. Stand on one leg for 3-5 seconds. Rest. Stand on other leg. Do 2-3 more times.

Too easy?

- Slowly stand on each leg longer (up to 30 seconds).
- Work up to standing on each leg for another 30 seconds.
- Slowly hold on less to the sink or counter.
- Sing a song or recite a poem while standing on one leg.



### 2. High Stepping Sideways Walk

Stand tall facing sink. Hold on with both hands. Take two high steps sideways to the left. Take two high steps sideways to the right. Move hands along the counter for support.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Say the days of the week or the months of the year forward, then backward, as you step.
- Slowly hold on less to the sink or counter.



These activities are part of the Strategies and Actions for Independent Living Program (2012) - BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit.

September 2012



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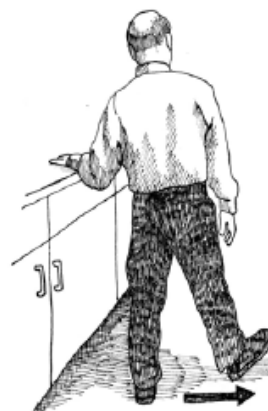
## Level 3: Moving - SAIL® Home Activity Program

### 3. Tap Dancing

- Stand sideways to sink. Hold on with closest hand. Tap heel of outside leg forward and return, sideways and return, backwards and return. Relax. Do 2-3 more times. Turn and face other direction. Repeat with other leg.
- Tap once with one heel, then once with other heel at different spots all around you. Do 2-3 more times.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Slowly hold on less to the sink or counter.



### 4. Forward Lunge

Stand sideways to sink, holding on with one hand. Step forward with one leg, keeping chest and head up. Put most of your weight over your front leg, keeping both knees bent. Hold. Step back with front leg to starting position. Do 2-3 more times. Turn and face other direction. Repeat with other leg.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Take a bigger step forward.
- Slowly hold on less to the sink or counter.



### 5. Forward and Backward Walk

- Stand sideways to sink, holding on with one hand. Walk forward on toes for 3-5 steps. Relax. Walk backward on toes for 3-5 steps. Relax. Do 2-3 more times.
- Walk forward on heels for 3-5 steps. Relax. Walk backward on heels for 3-5 steps. Relax. Do 2-3 more times.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Slowly hold on less to the sink or counter.



These activities are part of the Strategies and Actions for Independent Living Program (2012) - BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit.

September 2012



Strategies and Actions for Independent Living®

## Level 3: Moving - SAIL® Home Activity Program

### 6. Heel to Toe Walk

Stand sideways to sink, holding on with one hand. Walk forward, heel of one foot in line and touching toes of other foot for 3-5 steps. Walk backward, toes of one foot in line and touching heel of other foot for 3-5 steps. Do 2-3 more times.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Slowly hold on less to the sink or counter.



### 7. Sit to Stand

Sit tall in a firm chair with armrests. Put your walker in front of you and lock the brakes. Lean forward, nose over toes, and stand up, using your arms as little as possible. Slowly sit down.

Too easy?

- Slowly do more.
- Use your arms less until you don't use them at all.
- Stand up faster
- Stand up with your arms folded across your chest (hands touching opposite shoulders).



These activities are part of the Strategies and Actions for Independent Living Program (2012) - BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit.

September 2012

We recommend you continue the exercises above for six to eight weeks, until you begin to feel stronger and better.

We recommend you add the below exercises to help your arms stay strong as well. You can replace the weight with an object you can hold easily. Start by doing them every day.

### Biceps Curls



1. Place your forearm on a chair's armrest.
2. Hold a light weight (or none at all if this is too difficult to start).
3. Keep your elbow on the armrest and bring the weight upward.
4. Repeat two to three times, gradually increase up to 10 times.

### Seated Over Head Weights



1. Sit on a chair and hold a weight (start with something light if this is too difficult to start)
2. Move the object overhead as shown.
3. Repeat two to three times, gradually increase up to 10 times.

### Standing Arm Abduction



1. Stand while holding light weights in both hands (or none at all if too difficult to start).
2. Lift arms slowly up while keeping elbows bent.
3. Slowly bring arms down to return to starting position.
4. Start two to three times and increase up to 10 times.

Adapted from: Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, Montefiore Medical Center (Patient and Caregiver

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Adapted from VCH & Providence Health Care COVID-19 Home-based Activity Guide



## Breathing Exercises and Energy Saving

- Your lungs will need time to recover and exercises can help them get stronger.
- Please complete these exercises/activities every day as described below. It will get easier as you get stronger.

### Breathing Exercises

Slowly increasing your time walking and being active will help improve your breathing. Sitting upright and starting to move around can help the lungs expand, clear secretions, and move air.

Breathing exercises may be individualized. These may be provided by a therapist and could include:

- Deep breathing with forced expiration
- Deep breathing + hold
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Pursed lip breathing
- Walking and the exercises already reviewed also strengthen your lungs

### Diaphragmatic Breathing *(Note: adapted from New York-Presbyterian Rehabilitation Centre)*

Lie on your back with your head on a pillow, or your knees may be bent. Put one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Breathe deeply through your nose, allowing your chest and belly to expand, and out through your mouth.

Perform for one minute, then rest for 30 seconds. Start with doing this for two to three times in a row and build up to 10 times.



## Deep Breathing Exercises

If you have an incentive spirometer provided you may use it. You can also do deep breathing without this device.

Sit as tall as you can, with your back up. Breathe out completely, then slowly breathe in to your maximum inhalation. Slowly breathe out. You will feel your lungs expand. Try to control the rate of breathing in and out slowly. Perform for one minute and take a 30 second rest.

Try to do this two to three times in a row, and repeat it several times in the day.



## Calm Breathing Exercise

Imagine you have a balloon in your stomach and when you breathe in you are going to blow that balloon up, so your stomach will expand. And when you breathe out, the air in the balloon will also go out, so your stomach will flatten.

Now you try to breathe from your stomach. Start by breathing out until all the air is out; then breathe in. If you can, try and breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Now the second step is to slow the rate of your breathing down. Take three seconds to breathe in, then two seconds to hold your breath, and three seconds to breathe out.

Breathe in, 1, 2, 3. Hold, 1, 2. And breathe out, 1, 2, 3. *(Repeat this breathing exercise for approximately five minutes.)*



For an audio guide of this exercise, follow these steps:

- Download the free **Breathe2Relax** app on an Apple iOS or Google Play device.
- Open the app and select the “Breathe” option at the bottom of the screen.
- The app will guide you through a calm breathing exercise. (Note: you can adjust the length to the inhale to your own comfort.)

## Good Dental Hygiene

Brush your teeth regularly, recommended up to three times a day, to help keep your mouth and breathing area clean.



If you are dealing with ongoing breathlessness and/or fatigue that is stable or slowly improving, energy conservation techniques may help you better manage daily activities. If your breathing is getting more difficult to do, please contact your doctor.

### Energy Saving Strategies May Include

- Prioritizing activities
  - Decide which activities are most important and focus on those.
- Planning your time
  - Plan your day and week to improve efficiency and allow for rest breaks.
- Simplifying tasks
  - Break tasks into smaller chunks, delegate hard tasks to others, or use tools to help.
- Pacing yourself
  - Work at a slow and steady pace and monitor for signs of fatigue.

### Pain Medicine

If you are experiencing pain, make sure you talk to your health-care provider about pain medication so you can be as comfortable as possible. Good pain relief is necessary for you to perform the activities described in this guide. Being unable to take a deep breath increases your risk of getting pneumonia.

### Nutrition and Food Access

Good nutrition following Canada's Food Guide (<https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>) is recommended. Allow your body to have nutritious foods and avoid junk food.

However, after a significant illness, your body might be weak, deconditioned, and suffering from symptoms that impact your ability to eat such as poor appetite or serious cough. There are strategies that you can use to increase the amount of nutrition you are consuming. Try eating small amounts more often and foods that are very high in energy and protein.

#### Energy:

- Include a fat source at each meal such as oil, butter, margarine, cream, sweet treat, nuts.

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- Drink energy-rich beverages between meals, such as milk, juice or nutritional supplement drink (e.g., Ensure, Boost, Carnation Instant Breakfast or diabetic alternatives).
- Avoid foods labelled “light”, “low calorie”, “Reduced Fat”, “fat-free”, “reduced sugar”. Choose full-fat yogurt and cheese, as well as whole milk.
- Have ready-made frozen meals and prepared snacks on hand (e.g., granola bars, cheese and crackers, pudding, nuts, trail mix)
- Protein:
  - Choose 2-3 servings of meat or alternatives each day (meat, eggs, nuts, seeds, beans, tofu)
  - Choose 2-3 servings of dairy products each day (milk, yogurt, cheese)

## **Food Access**

If you are worried about access to food, or don't have enough money to buy healthy food, there are financial supports out there for you. The B.C. Government has put together a list of all the different [financial benefits](#) if you have been affected financially by COVID-19.

If you are in need of immediate, short-term help with food, please contact the food bank in your community.

## **Smoking**

COVID-19 causes challenges for your lungs. This is a good time to consider stopping smoking to improve your recovery. Talk to your doctor and connect with the [HealthLinkBC Program](#) for supports.

## Coping and Mental Health

### Coping with COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic can cause stress and anxiety because it is disrupting normal life for many people all at once. While it is important to be informed and to take action to limit the spread of infection, the amount of information and attention on this topic can increase stress and anxiety. Here are some ideas to help manage worry, anxiety, and stress in these uncertain times.

#### **Accept that some anxiety and fear is normal:**

COVID-19 is a new virus and we are still learning about it. The uncertainty and the changes that are unfolding can make most people feel a bit anxious. This is normal, and it can actually help motivate us to take action to protect ourselves and others, and to learn more about the pandemic.

#### **Separate what is in your control from what is not:**

There are things you can do, and it is helpful to focus on those. Wash your hands. Practice physical-social distancing. Limit your consumption of news (once per day or less if you can), and stick to trust-worthy sources such as the World Health Organization, Government of Canada, and BC Centre for Disease Control.

#### **Stay in the present:**

Perhaps your worry is compounding – you are not only thinking about what is currently happening, but also projecting into the future. When you find yourself worrying about something that hasn't happened, gently bring yourself back to the present moment. Notice the sights, sounds, tastes, and other sensory experiences in your immediate moment and name them. Engaging in mindfulness activities is one way to help stay grounded when things feel beyond our control.

#### **Use practical ways to relax:**

Relax your body often by doing things that work for you – take deep breaths, stretch, meditate, or take a walk outside. Make time to unwind. Engage in some other activities you enjoy. You can also use the exercise included in this package.

#### **Stay connected:**

Talk with loved ones and friends about your concerns and how you are feeling. Enjoy conversations unrelated to the outbreak. Remind yourself of the many important and

positive things in your lives. If you are not able to see loved ones face-to-face think about other safe ways of connecting (e.g., phone, Facetime).

**Stick to a normal routine:**

As much as possible stick to a normal routine – wake up times, personal hygiene, regular meals, exercise, and hydration. Keep alcohol and substances to a minimum.

**Reach out if you need more support:**

If you are feeling particularly anxious or if you are struggling with your mental health, reach out to a mental health professional for support. You do not have to be alone with your worry and it can be comforting to share what you are experiencing with those trained to help. If you require assistance to learn the following techniques contact your local Mental Health office and a nurse or social worker can help.

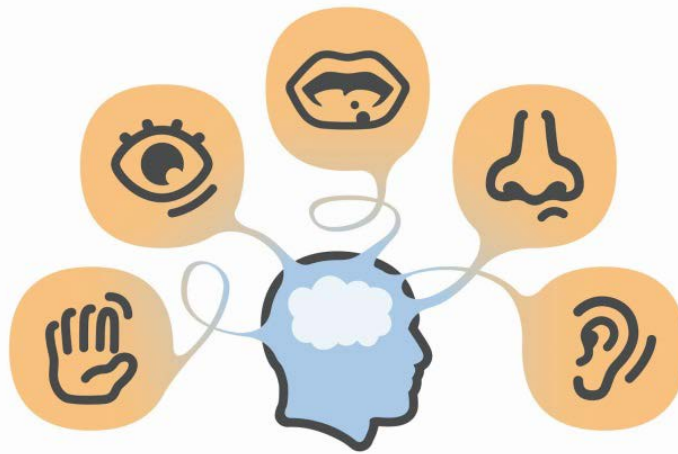
### 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise

Grounding is a technique that helps keep someone in the present, and can be helpful for managing overwhelming feelings or emotional distress. This grounding exercise involves sensory awareness and can help you regain your mental focus from an intensely emotional state.

Procedure:

1. Name five things you can see in the room right now.
2. Name four things you can physically feel right now.
3. Name three things you can hear right now.
4. Name two things you can smell right now.
5. Name one good thing about yourself.

Repeat the five steps once more if needed.



*For an audio guide of this exercise, follow these steps:*

- Go to [www.YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com).
- Search for “5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique”.
- Select “**5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise – Mindfulness for Anxiety**” (URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cEUenMhMoY&t=2s>)

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise

Progressive muscle relaxation is a technique that is used to help manage stress and anxiety. It involves tensing particular muscles and then releasing them. During this exercise, each muscle should be tensed, but not to the point of strain. If you have any injuries or pain, you can skip the affected areas. Pay special attention to the feeling of releasing tension in each muscle and the resulting feeling of relaxation.

First get into a comfortable position. When you are ready, tense the muscle group described. Make sure you feel the tension but not to the point of pain. Keep the muscle tensed for approximately five seconds. Then, relax the muscle and keep it relaxed for approximately 10 seconds.

Relaxation sequence:

1. **Left foot.** Curl your toes downwards.
2. **Left lower leg.** Pull your toes towards you to stretch your calf muscle.
3. **Right foot.** Curl your toes downwards.
4. **Right lower leg.** Pull your toes towards you to stretch your calf muscle.
5. **Thighs.** Squeeze your two thighs together.
6. **Hips and buttocks.** Squeeze your buttock muscles.
7. **Chest and stomach.** Tighten your stomach muscles.
8. **Right hand and forearm.** Make a fist with your right hand.
9. **Right upper arm.** Bring your right forearm up to your shoulder.
10. **Lift hand and forearm.** Make a fist with your hand.
11. **Left upper arm.** Bring your left forearm up to your shoulder.
12. **Upper back.** Push your shoulder blades together.
13. **Shoulders.** Bring your shoulders up towards your ears.
14. **Mouth and jaw.** Open your mouth as wide as you can.
15. **Eyes and cheeks.** Squeeze your eyes shut.
16. **Forehead.** Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go.

*For an audio guide of this exercise, follow these steps:*

- Download the free **MindShift** app on an Apple iOS or Google Play device.
- Open the app and select the “Chill Zone” option at the bottom of the screen.
- Select the “Tense and Release” exercise.



## Calming Imagery Exercise

Calming imagery exercises involve generating mental images that re-create calming sensations including sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and touch.

To begin, sit or lie down in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Take a few slow breaths.

Now imagine that you are walking down a path into a lush forest. As you walk along the path you completely take in the sights, sounds, smells, and feel of the place. All around you are trees, grasses, and fragrant flowers. You hear the soothing sounds of birds chirping and the wind as it gently blows through the treetops. You smell the rich dampness of the forest floor. Through gaps in the treetops you see the sun high in a blue sky. The sun is dispersed through the canopy of the treetops and filters down onto the forest floor, creating intricate patterns of light and shadow. With each breath you take in this place, you feel a deep sense of peace and relaxation.

You soon come to a clearing. There are several flat rocks in the clearing surrounded by soft moss. A small stream runs among the rocks. You lie back on the cushiony moss and put your feet into the cool water. You feel the warm sun and a gentle, light breeze through your hair and across your skin. The sparkling clear water rushes around the multi-coloured rocks, making little whirlpools. You put your hand into the water and lift a handful to your lips. The water is cool and refreshing. You close your eyes and listen to the water trickling through the rocks. You bathe in the warm sun and feel as though you are floating.....relaxing deeper and deeper.

You let yourself sink further into relaxation, while continuing to be aware of the sights, smells, sounds, and feel of the forest around you. You allow yourself to let go of any concerns or worries and to feel completely refreshed and rejuvenated in this place.

When you are ready, imagine that you slowly get up and leave the clearing. As you walk back down the path through the forest, fully take in this place and realize that you may return whenever you wish by the same path. Each time you enter this place you will feel relaxed and at peace.

*For an audio guide of this exercise, follow these steps:*

- Download the free **Mindshift** app on an Apple iOS or Google Play device.
- Open the app and select the “Chill Zone” option at the bottom of the screen.
- Select the “Mental Vacation” exercise.

## Mindful Hand Massage

This exercise has a double purpose:

1. Self-care
2. Relaxation and refocusing attention

During the pandemic you will have to wash your hands several times during the day. The unfortunate result is dry hands that require moisturizing. Being mindful means giving your full attention to the activity you are doing. In these times of uncertainty, it can be helpful to refocus your attention on **concrete actions you can take**.



1. Apply lotion to your left hand. Focus your attention on the feeling of the lotion being rubbed into your hand.
2. Exhale slowly for five seconds and pair your exhale with in-between finger rubbing. Focus your attention on your breathing and the sensations of your hands.
3. Inhale again for five seconds and pair your breathing with rubbing the back of your hands and wrists.
4. Exhale slowly for five seconds and pair your exhale with the action of rubbing your thumbs clasped in the opposite hand.
5. Inhale for five seconds and pair your breathing-in with rubbing your fingertips against the opposite palm
6. Repeat with your right hand.
7. Wipe off any excess lotion and take a moment to feel how your hands feel softer.

At every step of the process your attention should be fully focused on the sensations of massaging your hands and your breathing. Good job! 😊

## **Managing Distress with Senses**

Learning to relax and soothe yourself is very important for many reasons. When you're relaxed, your body feels better. It also functions in a healthier way. Your body is no longer in a state of constant emergency, preparing to either confront a stressful situation or run away from it. As a result, it's easier for your brain to think of healthier ways to cope with your problems.

Consider simple soothing activities that use your senses. These activities are meant to bring you a small amount of peace in your life. So, if one of these activities doesn't help you feel relaxed, or makes you feel worse, don't do it. Try something else. And remember, each one of us is different. Think about what works best for you and be willing to try something new.

### **Self-Soothing Using Your Sense of Smell**

Smell is a very powerful sense that can often trigger memories and make you feel a certain way. If smells soothe you, come up with one self-soothing idea involving your sense of smell.

### **Self-Soothing Using Your Sense of Vision**

Vision is very important to humans. In fact, a large portion of our brain is devoted solely to our sense of sight. If sights soothe you, come up with one self-soothing idea involving your sense of vision.

### **Self-Soothing Using your Sense of Hearing**

Certain sounds can soothe us. Listening to gentle music, for example, may be relaxing. However, each one of us has our own preferences. You have to find what works best for you. If sounds soothe you, come up with one self-soothing idea involving your sense of hearing.

### **Self-Soothing Using Your Sense of Taste**

Taste is also a very powerful sense. Our sensations of flavour can trigger memories and feelings. If tastes and flavours soothe you, come up with one self-soothing idea involving your sense of taste.

## **“Getting Some Distance” from Worries**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, you may find yourself frequently worrying. These worries may be about your personal health, your family’s safety, distressing information you are learning about the pandemic, and measures you need to take to stay safe and reduce the spread of the virus. Some degree of fear and anxiety is normal. Sometimes we get tangled up with our thoughts – they feel relentless and colour how we think about the world and affect how we behave. If you find you are preoccupied by these worries or they are causing you distress, it may be helpful to ‘get some distance’ from upsetting thoughts. One useful technique involves, in essence, gently shifting your attention away from these worries.

First, notice the thought. Instead of letting thoughts roll through your mind unchecked, pay attention to the specific worrisome thoughts that are coming up.

Next, simply label the thought. For example, “Ah, I am having another COVID worry”, or “I am having the thought that \_\_\_\_\_”.

Acknowledge the thought without judgement. We are typically not very good at ‘thought-stopping’ but we can accept that these thoughts will come and go, and we can choose not to spend time with a thought. You might even say to yourself “I don’t have to focus on this right now” or “I don’t have to spend time with this thought”.

Next, gently guide your attention to the present. Focusing on your breath or another physical sensation (e.g., noticing your feet planted on the ground) is a useful way to guide your mind to the here-and-now, and away from distressing thoughts.

Be gentle with yourself. Remember that you may need to do this multiple times, especially for thoughts that are persistent. That’s ok – each time, try to complete the steps without judgment.

## Using Self-Encouraging Coping Thoughts

During stressful times, it can be helpful to repeat encouraging words to keep us motivated or to help us endure the pain that we're experiencing. Often, this can be done with self-encouraging coping thoughts. Coping thoughts are reminders of how strong you've been in the past when you survived distressing situation, and they are also reminders of encouraging words that have given you strength. Coping thoughts are especially helpful when you first notice that you're feeling agitated, nervous, angry, or upset. If you can recognize your distress early on, you'll have a better chance of using one of these thoughts to help yourself.

Here is a list of some coping thoughts that many people have found to be helpful. Check the ones that are helpful to you and/or create your own:

- "This situation won't last forever."
- "I've already been through many other painful experiences, and I've survived."
- "This too shall pass."
- "My feelings make me uncomfortable right now, but I can accept them."
- "I can be anxious and still deal with the situation."
- "I'm strong enough to handle what's happening to me right now."
- "This is an opportunity for me to learn how to cope with my fears."
- "I can take all the time I need right now to let go and relax."
- "These are just my feelings, and eventually they will go away."
- "It's okay to feel sad/anxious/afraid sometimes."
- "I can think different thoughts if I want to."
- "This situation sucks, but it's only temporary."
- Other ideas ...

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# ACTION CALENDAR: MEANINGFUL MAY 2020



MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

**"Start Where You Are. Use What You Have.  
Do What You Can" ~ Arthur Ashe**



**4** Focus on what you can do rather than what you can't do

**5** Send friends a photo of a time you all enjoyed together

**6** Take a step towards one of your life goals, however small

**7** Let someone you love know how much they mean to you

**1** Take a minute to remember what really matters to you and why

**2** Do something meaningful for someone you really care about

**3** Reconnect with nature today, even if you're stuck indoors

**11** What are your most important values? Use them today

**12** Be grateful for the little things, even in difficult times

**13** Today do something to care for the natural world

**14** Show your gratitude to people who are helping to make things better

**15** Find out about the values and traditions of another culture

**16** Look around you and notice five things you find meaningful

**17** Take a positive action to help in your local community

**18** Hand-write a note to someone you love and send them a photo of it

**19** Find a way to craft what you are doing to give it more meaning

**20** Reflect on what makes you feel really valued and appreciated

**21** Share photos of 3 things you find meaningful or memorable

**22** Ask a loved one or colleague what matters most to them and why

**23** Share an inspiring quote with others to give them a boost

**24** Do something special today and revisit it in your memory tonight

**25** Give your time to help a project or charity you care about

**26** Recall three things you've done that you are really proud of

**27** Today link your decisions and choices to your purpose in life

**28** Tell someone about an event in your life that was really meaningful

**29** Think about how your actions make a difference for others

**30** Find three good reasons to be hopeful about the future

**31** Look up at the sky. Remember we are all part of something bigger

**ACTION FOR HAPPINESS**



[www.actionforhappiness.org](http://www.actionforhappiness.org)

31 actions to look after ourselves and each other as we face this global crisis together

**Keep Calm · Stay Wise · Be Kind**