

After Covid-19

Information and resources to help you recover

Having COVID-19 is hard. And if you or a loved one has long-term health effects after COVID-19, you may need help to manage them. You're not alone. There is support for you as you recover.

This resource can help you understand the effects of COVID-19 and cope with the health challenges you may have after COVID-19. It can also help you make a plan with your healthcare provider to improve your health and manage your symptoms. This is important as you recover, so you can get back to the things you need and want to do.

Who is this resource for?

This resource is for people recovering from COVID-19 who are having ongoing health concerns. It's also for anyone who is caring for a person recovering from COVID-19.

What is long COVID?

Recovering from COVID-19 is different for everyone, no matter your age or your health. Some people feel better in a few weeks. For others, it takes months. Long COVID is when you still have symptoms months after being diagnosed with the virus.

Research about long COVID is happening, and there's still a lot we don't know.

Some symptoms of long COVID

- shortness of breath (you feel like you can't breathe deeply enough)
- heart palpitations (fast or irregular heartbeat)
- cough that won't go away
- fever
- problems with swallowing (dysphagia)
- sore throat
- loss of taste (ageusia)
- loss of smell (anosmia)
- headaches
- tinnitus (ringing in your ears)
- muscle and joint pain
- mental health conditions (depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD)
- feeling very weak and tired (fatigue)
- gut problems (diarrhea, constipation, nausea and vomiting)



- sleep problems
- feeling dizzy
- changes to your vision (how you see)
- changes to your hearing
- stuffy nose
- brain fog, trouble with memory and concentration
- skin rash

When should I call my healthcare provider?

Recovering from COVID-19 is different for everyone. It's important to contact your healthcare provider if you:

- are worried about your recovery
- feel short of breath and it's not getting better, no matter what you try
- feel very short of breath doing things that are normally easy for you
- find that your attention, memory, thinking, or energy levels are not getting better
- have symptoms that make it very hard or that stop you from doing your regular daily activities (like caring for yourself or going back to work or school)
- feel depressed, anxious, or stressed and this feeling isn't getting better

If it's a medical emergency, **call 911 right away**. This includes:

- serious trouble breathing (struggling for each breath, only able to say 1 word at a time)
- very bad chest pain
- having a hard time waking up
- feeling very confused
- passing out or fainting

If it's **not** an emergency and you have questions about recovering from COVID-19, call the [Rehabilitation Advice Line](#). (Linked page may only be available in English.)

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call **Health Link** at **811**.

Current as of: March 23, 2021

Author: Neurosciences, Rehabilitation & Vision Strategic Clinical Network, and Allied Health Professional Practice and Education, Health Professions Strategy and Practice

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Symptoms

If you had COVID-19, the symptoms can linger. Read further about how you can manage your symptoms as you recover from COVID-19.

Read more about:

- Feeling short of breath
- Coughing
- Eating, drinking, and swallowing
- Loss of taste and smell
- Joint and muscle pain

Feeling short of breath

It's common to feel short of breath after COVID-19. This feels like you can't get enough air into your lungs. It can happen when you're unwell and as you recover because you can lose strength and fitness.

Shortness of breath should get better as you slowly do more activities. As you recover, try the following positions and techniques to help to yourself breathe easier.

Body positions to help with shortness of breath

When you're feeling short of breath, take slow, controlled breaths in any of these positions. You can learn more about how to relax while breathing by listening to the Deep breathing audio track or going to Stress management: Breathing exercises for relaxation.

High side lying

1. Lie on your side.
2. Use a pillow to support your head and neck.
3. Bend your knees slightly.



Forward lean sitting onto a table

1. Sit at a table.
2. Lean forward from your waist with your head and neck resting on a pillow and your arms resting on the table. (You can also try this without a pillow.)



Forward lean sitting with no table in front

1. Sit on a chair.
2. Lean forward to rest your arms on your lap or the armrests of the chair.



Forward lean standing

1. Stand up.
2. Lean forward onto a windowsill or other stable surface.



Standing with back support

1. While standing, lean your back against a wall and put your hands by your side.
2. Put your feet about 30 cm (1 foot) away from the wall and slightly apart.



Ways to breathe when you're short of breath

Go to the following links for breathing exercises (such as pursed-lip breathing and belly breathing) you can try to help with shortness of breath:

- **COPD: Exercises for easier breathing (video)** (video - MyHealth.Alberta.ca) Note that this information can apply to your COVID-19 recovery, not just to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- **COPD: Learning to breathe easier** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca) Note that this information can apply to your COVID-19 recovery, not just to COPD.
- **Breathing techniques for COPD** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca) Note that this information can apply to your COVID-19 recovery, not just to COPD.

Coughing

Coughing is common after having a respiratory (breathing system) illness like COVID-19. You may have a dry cough or a cough with mucus (productive cough, which is how your body tries to get rid of mucus). It's hard when you can't control your cough, and it can make you feel very tired.

There are things you can try to help control your cough so you feel better. These include controlled coughing and lying in different positions to help drain mucus from your lungs.

Go to the following links to learn these techniques and more ways to help control your cough:

- **Relieving a cough** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)
- **COPD: Clearing your lungs** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)
- **COVID-19: How to manage symptoms** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)

If your cough is making you feel short of breath and you're wheezing, a doctor or healthcare provider may prescribe an inhaler to help with your cough. Learn more about inhalers by reading **What is an inhaler?** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)

Eating, drinking, and swallowing problems

If you were in the hospital for COVID-19, you may have had a breathing tube attached to a ventilator (a machine that helps you breathe). If you did, you may have some trouble swallowing food, drinks or medicine. This is because the muscles that help with swallowing may have become weak. You may notice that you:

- cough or choke when you eat or drink
- have a wet-sounding voice after eating or drinking
- have a lot of chest infections and this isn't normal for you
- feel like things are sticking in your throat when you eat or drink

Swallowing and nutrition

Swallowing problems can make it hard for you to get good nutrition. Eating well and drinking enough fluids are important to help you recover from COVID-19. If you have trouble swallowing, try these tips to help you get nutrition safely:

- Sit up when you eat or drink. Never eat or drink lying down.
- Stay sitting up, standing, or walking for at least 30 minutes after you eat.
- Choose soft, smooth, or moist foods as you start your recovery, or chop food into very small pieces.
- Focus on eating and don't do other things like watching TV, reading, or talking at the same time.
- Take your time eating and drinking. Take small bites of food. Chew your food well before you swallow. Take small sips of your drink between bites of food.
- Make sure there's no food left in your mouth before you take another bite or sip. If you need to, swallow again.
- Eat when you feel alert and well rested.
- Eat small meals throughout the day, if eating full meals makes you tired.
- If you cough or choke, or it's hard to breathe when you eat and drink, take a break to recover.

Swallowing and infections

When your swallowing muscles are weak, your body also has trouble protecting your airway from food, drinks, or saliva. Swallowing problems also put you at higher risk for choking and lung infections.

You have 2 tubes that connect from the back of your throat:

- 1 for breathing that goes to your lungs (called the trachea)
- 1 for swallowing that goes to your stomach (called the esophagus)

You have muscles for swallowing that make food, water, and saliva go to the tube to your stomach and stop them from going to your lungs. When those are weak, the food, water, and saliva can go into your lungs. This can make you choke and cause lung infections. Follow the tips for swallowing and nutrition (above) to protect your airway if you're having trouble with swallowing. This will help stop choking and lung infections.

You can also lower your risk of getting an infection if food, fluid, or saliva enters your airway by:

- brushing your teeth after every meal
- drinking lots of water

And doing these things helps to keep your mouth healthy.

If you continue to have concerns with your swallowing, contact your healthcare provider or a speech-language pathologist or call the Alberta Health Services **Rehabilitation Advice Line (1-833-379-0563)**.

Loss of taste and smell

After COVID-19, you may notice:

- changes to your sense of taste
- changes to your sense of smell

Your sense of smell is closely tied to your sense of taste. If you can't smell food, you will likely have trouble tasting it. Loss of smell or taste can lead to a low appetite (you don't feel hungry), and might cause you to eat less. This puts you at risk for not getting enough nutrition and you could lose weight without meaning to.

Try these tips to get good nutrition when you have changes in taste and smell:

- Prepare colourful food.
- Use strong flavours, such as cinnamon, chili, mustard, or vinegar.
- Try food at different temperatures, such as hot, room temperature, and cold.
- Use different food textures, such as crunchy or soft. (If you're having trouble swallowing, see the section on eating, drinking, and swallowing problems.)
- Try to focus on your food—the taste, how it feels in your mouth, and what it looks like.

Joint and muscle pain

As you're recovering from COVID-19, you might have joint or muscle pain. Staying in bed for more than a couple of days can lead to stiff joints and muscle weakness. They may ache, burn, or feel tired, stiff, or sore. Here are some ideas to help your joints and muscles feel better as you recover:

- When you can get out of bed, try not to sit or lie down in one position for a long time. Change your position often (for example, once an hour). Get up to go to the washroom, get a drink from the kitchen, or go look out a window.

- Do gentle stretches to start moving your joints and muscles again. This can help you manage your pain. See the exercising and being active section for gentle stretches you can try.
- See the information on using heat or ice to lower your pain (note that you can use heat or ice for pain in other areas of your body, not just your lower back).
- Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist about taking an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve). Follow the instructions on the package.
- Learn more about staying active when you have trouble moving.
- Call the Alberta Health Services [Rehabilitation Advice Line](#) to get advice on managing joint and muscle pain. (Linked page may only be available in English.)

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call **Health Link** at **811**.

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Self-care

If you had COVID-19, getting out of bed, feeling tired, and not having the same energy you did before may happen. Read further about how you can get back into a routine as you recover from COVID-19.

Read more about:

- Getting back into a routine
- Managing your energy
- Eating well
- Sleeping well

Getting back into a routine

After COVID-19, you may not have the same energy you did before. Everything you do takes energy, and everyday tasks can take more effort than before.

When you're ready, try getting out of bed, getting dressed, and getting back into a basic routine. This will help you recover. It will also stop deconditioning. Deconditioning is a term for when you lose strength and fitness after not moving for a while, like when you're sick in bed. It is important to try to start doing things as soon as it is safe; the longer you are in bed for all or most of the day, the more strength and fitness you lose, and the longer it will take to get it back.

Basic routines include:

- washing your face
- brushing your teeth
- getting dressed
- going to the kitchen for meals
- putting on pajamas at bedtime

Doing these everyday tasks is good for your muscles, energy, heart, lungs, and mood. Go at your own pace. It's OK if getting out of bed and getting dressed is all you have energy to do that day.

Managing your energy

Managing, saving, or conserving your energy all mean finding ways of doing daily tasks with as little effort as possible. This is important as you recover, because you may feel more tired than usual. Planning your activities, pacing yourself, and deciding what's important to you are all ways to help manage your energy.

What are some ways to manage my energy?

The following links give ideas for being careful with your energy as you recover from COVID-19.

- **Conserving energy when you have COPD or other chronic conditions** (including COVID-19) (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)
- **Pacing and energy conservation** (Note that this information can apply to your COVID-19 recovery, not just to concussions.) (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)

What tools can help me manage my energy?

There are many pieces of equipment or tools (called assistive devices or adaptive equipment) that can help you manage your energy. These include:

- tools for grooming and dressing
- tools for daily chores
- tools for getting around
- adaptive equipment like a 4-wheeled walker, bath seat, or raised toilet seat with arms

Learn more about assistive devices that may help you save your energy during recovery.

Many communities have programs that let you borrow equipment for a short time. Ask your healthcare provider about how to borrow equipment short term, if you think you need it. You can call the [AHS Rehabilitation Advice Line](#) if you need help with finding or borrowing equipment. See the resources section for more. (Linked page may only be available in English.)

Eating well

Food gives your body energy. It's important to keep eating and drinking when you're sick and as you recover from COVID-19.

What nutrition do I need to recover?

To get the nutrition you need, eat a variety of foods each day, such as:

- protein foods (meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy, beans, and lentils) to help maintain and rebuild muscles
- fruits, vegetables, and whole grains for vitamins, minerals, and fiber to help your body recover from illness
- healthy fats (nuts and seeds, olive oil, fatty fish like salmon, and avocado) to help give you the energy and nutrition your body needs to recover
- fluids (water, coffee or tea, milk or plant-based beverages, sports drinks, and nutrition supplement drinks), which are especially important if you've been sick with a fever, throwing up, or had diarrhea

How can I eat and drink when my energy is low?

Here are some tips to help you eat and drink when you're tired or have low energy:

- Take small bites so it's easier to breathe while you eat.
- Eat slowly, and stop for a few moments between bites to catch your breath.
- Eat 5 to 6 small meals throughout the day instead of 3 larger meals.
- If you are too tired to regularly finish your meals or snacks, have food and drinks that are higher in energy (calories) and protein. Examples include adding Greek or Icelandic yogurt to smoothies, putting avocado on a sandwich, or adding grated cheese or nut butter to foods.
- Drink fluids after meals so you don't get full too quickly.
- Sip small amounts of fluids if you need to drink while you eat.
- Snack every 2 to 3 hours, even if you don't feel hungry.
- Add nutrition supplement drinks, bars, or puddings to meals or snacks to get extra energy and protein.
- If you're choking or having trouble swallowing, see the section on eating, drinking, and swallowing for more tips.

Where can I learn more and find resources to help me eat well?

As you recover, see the following links to learn more about eating well, nutrition, and planning and shopping for healthy meals.

- **COVID-19: Nutrition for recovery — Alberta Health Services Nutrition Services** (ahs.ca)
- **Choose and prepare healthy food — Alberta Health Services Nutrition Services** (ahs.ca)
- **Nutrition and physical activity** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)
- **Meal planning (menu planner and grocery list)** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)
- **Healthy grocery list example** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)

If COVID-19 has made it harder for you to get food (for example, you can't leave your home or you've lost income), go to the resources section for places to get help.

Sleeping well

Different people need different amounts of sleep. When you're recovering from an illness, it's normal to need more sleep. You might need to take rests or a nap during the day—that's OK. Your body is working hard to recover.

The number of hours you sleep isn't as important as how you feel when you wake up. If you don't feel refreshed, you probably need more sleep.

The following links give you information about sleep problems you may have and advice to help you sleep well:

- **Sleep and your health** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)
- **Insomnia: Improving your sleep** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)
- **Sleep problems, age 12 and older** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)
- **Sleep journal (activity)** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)
- **30 days to a well-rested you (activity)** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)

If you still have trouble with sleep, talk to your healthcare provider, pharmacist, or call **Health Link** at **811**.

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Brain health and mental health

If you had COVID-19, you may have trouble concentrating and trouble with your memory. You may also feel depressed, anxious, or other mental health concerns. Read further about how you can manage brain health and mental health as you recover from COVID-19.

Read more about:

- Brain fog, trouble with memory and concentration
- Depression, anxiety, stress

Brain fog, trouble with memory and concentration

It's common for people who've had COVID-19 to have trouble with:

- thinking
- memory
- focus or attention

If you're having these concerns, it's important that you and your family talk about it. Changes to thinking, memory, and attention can affect your relationships, your everyday tasks, and your return to work or school. These challenges may go away in weeks or last for months. If the changes with your memory or thinking don't get better, contact your healthcare provider or talk to a psychologist or occupational therapist.

What can I try for thinking, attention, and memory concerns?

Here are some things you can try if you're having trouble thinking clearly, paying attention, and remembering. You can also see the sections about managing your energy and going back to work or school for more ideas that might help.

Exercise your body to help your brain recover

You may find it hard to exercise if you feel weak, are short of breath, or get tired easily. Slowly, try to add gentle exercises into your daily routine. See some suggestions in the exercise section to help you get started.

Exercise your brain

Try to do things you enjoy that get your brain working. Start with tasks that are a challenge but that you can still do. When you feel ready, slowly work up to harder challenges. You might try:

- new hobbies or activities
- puzzles
- word and number games
- memory games
- reading

Make lists, notes, and alerts

Try setting an alarm on your phone to remind you of what you need to do. Make daily lists or leave yourself notes where you will see them as reminders.

Break down tasks into small steps

You can break larger tasks up into smaller ones. This makes the tasks feel easier to do.

For example, in the morning you may want to:

1. Get out of bed, brush your teeth, and brush your hair.
2. Take a break.
3. Get dressed.
4. Take a break.
5. Prepare your breakfast and eat.
6. Take a break.

Get more tips for how to **manage memory concerns and daily tasks** ([MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca)).

Depression, anxiety, stress

Having COVID-19 can be hard on your mental health. Feeling stress, anxiety (worry, fear), or depression (feeling very sad, hopeless) is common when you're unwell and as you recover. Managing these feelings is an important part of your recovery.

If you already have a mental health care provider, it's a good idea to talk to them as you recover. Many providers are offering phone or online support. If you don't have mental health support and your symptoms are not getting better, contact your healthcare provider (such as your family doctor) or call the Alberta Health Services [Mental Health Helpline](#) for help. (Linked page may only be available in English.)

Connecting with others is another way to improve your mental health. If you can't connect in person, stay in contact with friends or family online or on the phone. And remember that it's OK to ask for help. Let family and friends know that they can help by reaching out to you during your recovery, even if you don't always respond right away.

For more information about stress, anxiety, and depression, and ways you can help yourself feel better, go to the links below. Also see the resources section for more places to get help.

Depression

- **Depression** ([MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca))
- **Depression, anxiety, and physical health problems** ([MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca))
- **Depression: Stop negative thoughts** ([MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca))

Anxiety

- **Anxiety** ([MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca))
- **Anxiety: Stop negative thoughts** ([MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca))

Stress

- **Stress management** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)
- **Ways to reduce stress** (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)

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Returning to work or school

After COVID-19, it's important to slowly return to your regular activities. Everyone returns to work, school, or other regular activities at a different rate or pace.

When is the right time to go back?

Some people feel well enough to go back to work or school as soon as they're done isolating. Other people may have symptoms like feeling very tired, shortness of breath, and trouble with memory for many months. These symptoms can make it harder to go back to doing regular activities. (See the sections on symptoms and brain health to learn more.) If you're still having symptoms, it might be too early to go back to your activities. Talk to your healthcare provider about what's best for you.

How can I make going back to work or school easier?

Don't try to do everything you used to do until you feel ready. As you recover, it may be best to go back to your regular work or school routine gradually. This could mean:

- talking to your employer about a gradual return to work, changing your work hours, or working from home
- taking on a role that is easier for you to manage as you recover
- making sure to take lots of breaks
- making a plan with your principal or teachers for how to learn at your own pace
- getting support for childcare

The following links have more information, as well as tips and advice, for returning to work and school after COVID-19.

- **Work and school** (Note that the information on this page can also apply to people returning to work and school after an illness, as well as a brain injury.) ([MyHealth.Ablerta.ca](https://myhealth.ablerta.ca))
- **Returning to school and sports** (Note that the information on this page can also apply to children returning to school and sports after an illness, as well as a head injury.) ([MyHealth.Ablerta.ca](https://myhealth.ablerta.ca))
- **Back to work?** (Note that these tips are also useful after an illness, as well as after a back injury.) ([MyHealth.Ablerta.ca](https://myhealth.ablerta.ca))
- **The fundamentals: Return-to-work plan** (This Government of Canada resource gives advice for making a plan to go back to work as you recover.) ([Canada.ca](https://canada.ca))

What if I face bullying or stigma after COVID-19?

Some people might experience bullying or feel stigma going back to work or school after COVID-19. This is when others treat you badly or blame you for getting sick. If this happens to you, get help. You did nothing wrong, and your workplace or school needs to support you in your recovery.

Learn more about **stigma and COVID-19**. ([MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca))

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Exercising and being active

A gradual return to exercise can be an important part of your recovery after COVID-19. Read further about how exercise can help you when you're ready. You'll also find exercises and stretches you can do at home.

Read more about:

- Exercise after COVID-19
- Warm-up exercises
- Aerobic exercises
- Strength exercises
- Cool-down exercises

Exercise after COVID-19

As you recover from COVID-19, **be slow and careful** with exercise. Sometimes, exercising can make you more tired or make your symptoms worse. If it's still hard to do basic tasks like getting dressed or showering, it is too early to add exercise.

Pace yourself carefully as you recover so you don't make your symptoms worse, get injured, or have any new symptoms. **Stop and rest** if your symptoms get worse during or after exercise.

If you have any questions about exercise after COVID-19, feel worse or more tired the day after exercise, or have a racing or irregular heartbeat, **talk to your healthcare provider** or call the Alberta Health Services [Rehabilitation Advice Line](#). (Linked page may only be available in English.)

Reasons to exercise

There are many good reasons to be active and exercise. When you feel well enough, exercise can be an important part of your recovery. Exercise can help you:

- feel less short of breath
- get stronger muscles
- have better balance and coordination
- think more clearly
- lower stress, put you in a better mood, and feel good about yourself
- have more energy to do the things you want to do

Start slowly and build up to exercise for 20 to 30 minutes, 5 days each week. You can also try shorter sessions more often in the day. Remember, it may take a while before you can do everything you were able to do before you got COVID-19.

The following sections gives examples of different exercises you can try. Remember that any activity that makes you feel a little short of breath counts as exercise. As you feel better, you can carefully challenge yourself more.

Exercising safely

Exercising safely is important. It's a good idea to work with a healthcare provider to make a plan for safe exercise as you recover. It's especially important if you:

- were in the hospital for COVID-19
- have any other health concerns or an injury
- are on oxygen therapy that your doctor prescribed (You **must** talk to your doctor before you do any exercise if you're using oxygen therapy.)

Remember these exercise safety tips:

- Always warm-up before exercising, and cool down after exercising.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing, and supportive shoes.
- Wait at least 1 hour after a meal before exercising.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Don't exercise in very hot weather.
- Exercise indoors in very cold weather.
- Exercise at the right level for you. Challenge yourself a little, but don't push yourself too hard.

When to talk to your healthcare provider about exercise

If you feel any of these symptoms, **stop** exercising or **don't** exercise, and contact your healthcare provider:

- nausea (feeling sick to your stomach)
- light headed or dizzy
- very short of breath (some shortness of breath is normal when you exercise—see the section Feeling short of breath)
- tight feeling in your chest
- pain

Learn more about exercise and being active

Go to these links for more information about exercising and being active:

- Fitness and exercise (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)
- How to start being active: Physical activity and exercise (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)
- Tips for people who don't like exercise (MyHealth.Alberta.ca)

Warm-up exercises

Note: If you're still having trouble doing basic tasks, it might be too early to start exercising. People recovering from COVID-19 may find that exercising too hard can make them very tired or feel worse. Approach exercise gradually and with caution. Talk to your healthcare provider for more advice.

Warming up gets your body ready for exercise and so you don't get injured. Your warm-up should last around 5 minutes, and at the end, you should feel slightly short of breath. You can do warm-up exercises sitting or standing. If you do your warm up standing, hold on to a stable surface to keep your balance if you need to. Repeat each movement 2 to 4 times.

Shoulder shrugs

1. Slowly lift your shoulders towards your ears.
2. Lower your shoulders back down.



Shoulder circles

1. Keep your arms relaxed by your side or resting on your lap.
2. Slowly move your shoulders in a circle forward and then in a circle backwards.



Side bends

1. Start with your body straight and your arms by your sides.
2. Slide one arm a short way towards the floor, bending sideways.
3. Come back to standing straight.
4. Repeat on the other side.



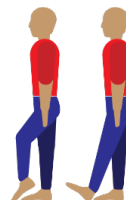
Knee lifts

Lift your knees up and down slowly one at a time. Your foot should come about 10 to 15 cm (3 to 6 inches) off the floor each time.



Ankle taps

1. If you need to, hold on to a stable chair or surface for support.
2. With one foot, tap your toes then tap your heel on the ground in front of you.
3. Repeat the motion with the other foot.



Ankle circles

1. Using one foot, draw circles in the air with your toes.
2. Repeat with your other foot.



Aerobic exercises

Note: If you're still having trouble doing basic tasks, it might be too early to start exercising. People recovering from COVID-19 may find that exercising too hard can make them very tired or feel worse. Approach exercise gradually and with caution. Talk to your healthcare provider for more advice.

Aerobic exercise (also called cardio) helps your blood flow and helps to keep your heart and lungs healthy.

Marching on the spot

Choose this exercise if you can't walk outside or you need to sit down often when you walk.

1. If you need to, hold on to a stable chair or surface for support. Have a chair nearby to rest.
2. Lift your knees one at a time.



If this is easy, challenge yourself by lifting your legs higher (hip height if possible).

Step ups

Choose this exercise if you can't walk outside or you need to sit down often when you walk.

1. Use a small step such as the bottom step of a flight of stairs
2. If you need to, hold on to the handrail for support. Have a chair nearby to rest.
3. Step up and down.
4. Change the leg you start with every 10 steps.



If this is easy, challenge yourself by:

- making the step higher or stepping faster
- holding weights as you step up and down, if your balance is steady enough

Walking

Choose walking if you can exercise outside. Use a walker or cane if you need to. Choose a route that is flat.

If walking is easy, challenge yourself by:

- walking faster or longer distances
- walking up a hill

Jogging or cycling

Choose these activities if you:

- could do them before you had COVID-19
- are ready for more of a challenge as you recover

Only jog or cycle if it's safe for you and your healthcare provider says it's OK.

Strength exercises

Note: If you're still having trouble doing basic tasks, it might be too early to start exercising. People recovering from COVID-19 may find that exercising too hard can make them very tired or feel worse. Approach exercise gradually and with caution. Talk to your healthcare provider for more advice.

Your muscles may have gotten weaker while you were unwell. Strengthening exercises help make you stronger.

Try to work up to doing strength exercises 3 times a week. Work your way up to 3 sets of 10 repetitions of each exercise, taking a short rest in between each set. Don't worry if you find these exercises hard—start with fewer repetitions in each set and build up. As you get stronger, use heavier weights to make your muscles work harder.

Keep a good posture with your back straight and your tummy tucked in. Do the exercises slowly. Remember to breathe in during the easier part of the exercise and breathe out as you do the harder part. For example in the bicep curl, breathe out as you bring the weight up, and breathe in as you lower the weight back down.

Bicep (upper arm) curl

You can do this exercise sitting or standing.

1. With your arms by your side, hold a weight in each hand with your palms facing forward. If you don't have a weight, you can use a can of food or a water bottle.
2. Keep the top part of your arm still.
3. Gently bend your elbow to lift the lower part of both arms and bring the weights up.
4. Slowly bring the weights back down.



If this is easy, challenge yourself by using heavier weights.

Wall push off

1. Place your hands flat against a wall at shoulder height, with your fingers facing upwards, and your feet about 30 cm (1 foot) away from the wall.
2. Keeping your body straight, slowly lower your body towards the wall by bending your elbows.
3. Gently push away from the wall again, until your arms are straight.

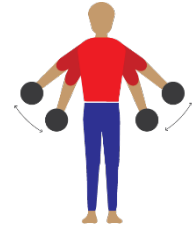


To make it more challenging, stand farther away from the wall.

Arm raises to the side

You can do this exercise sitting or standing.

1. Hold a weight in each hand, with your arms by your sides and your palms facing inwards. If you do not have a weight, you can use a can of food or a water bottle.
2. Raise both arms out to the side, up to your shoulder level (but not higher).
3. Slowly lower your arms back down.



If this hurts your shoulders, try making one of these changes:

- Don't use weights.
- Point your thumbs out from your body. (They'll be pointing up to the sky when you get to the top of the movement.)
- Bring your arms forward a bit. (You won't raise them straight out to the side, but somewhere between out to the side and straight out in front of you. Find the angle that's most comfortable for you.)

To make it more challenging, lift your arms higher (but not higher than shoulder level) or use heavier weights.

Sit to stand

1. Sit with your feet hip-width apart.
2. With your arms by your side or crossed over your chest, slowly stand up.
3. Hold the position for a count of 3.
4. Slowly sit back down on the chair.



Keep your feet on the floor during the whole exercise.

If you can't stand up from the chair without using your arms, try a higher chair. If this is still too hard at first, push with your arms.

To make this exercise more challenging:

- do the exercise very slowly
- use a lower chair
- hold a weight close to your chest



Knee straightening

1. Sit in a chair with your feet together.
2. Straighten 1 knee and hold your leg out straight for a moment, then slowly lower it.
3. Repeat with your other leg.



To make this exercise more challenging, hold your leg out for a count of 3 or do the exercise more slowly.

Squats

1. Stand with your back against a wall or other stable surface and keep your feet slightly apart.
2. Move your feet about 30 cm (1 foot) away from the wall. (Or rest your hands on the back of a stable chair.)
3. With your back against the wall or while holding on to the chair, slowly bend your knees a little. Your back will slide down the wall.
4. Keep your hips higher than your knees and don't let your knees go past your toes at the bottom of the movement.
5. Pause for a moment before slowly straightening your knees again.



To make this exercise more challenging:

- bend your knees more (but keep your hips higher than your knees)
- stay in the squat position (knees bent) for a count of 3 and then straighten your knees

Heel rises

1. Rest your hands on a stable surface for balance, but don't lean on them.
2. Slowly rise up on to your toes.
3. Slowly go back down again.



You can make this exercise more challenging by standing on your toes for a count of 3 or standing on 1 leg at a time.

Cool-down exercises

Note: If you're still having trouble doing basic tasks, it might be too early to start exercising. People recovering from COVID-19 may find that exercising too hard can make them very tired or feel worse. Approach exercise gradually and with caution. Talk to your healthcare provider for more advice.

Cool-down exercises, like the stretches below, let your body go back to normal before you stop exercising. They can also help you feel less sore after exercising.

Your cool-down should last about 5 minutes. Do each stretch gently and hold the stretch for 15 to 20 seconds. You can do each stretch 1 to 3 times during your cool-down.

If you can't do all the movements below, do the ones you can. You can also try walking slowly or gently marching on the spot, or repeat the warm-up exercises while you're sitting or standing.

Side stretch

1. Reach your right arm up to the ceiling and then lean over to the left slightly. You should feel a stretch along the right side of your body.
2. Return to the starting position.
3. Repeat on the opposite side.

**Shoulder stretch**

1. Put your arm out in front of you.
2. Keep your arm straight and bring it across your body at shoulder height.
3. Use your other hand to squeeze your arm to your chest so you feel a stretch around your shoulder.
4. Return to the starting position.
5. Repeat on the opposite side.

**Back of thigh (hamstring) stretch**

1. Sit on the edge of a chair with your back straight and feet flat on the floor.
2. Place your leg out straight in front of you with your heel resting on the floor.
3. Place your hands on your other thigh as support.
4. Sitting as tall as you can, bend slightly forward at your hips until you feel a slight stretch down the back of the leg that is stretched out.
5. Return to the starting position.
6. Repeat on the opposite side.

**Lower leg (calf) stretch**

1. Stand with your feet apart and lean forward onto a wall or something sturdy for support.
2. Keep your body upright and step one leg behind you.
3. With both feet facing forward, bend your front knee, keeping your back leg straight and your heel on the floor. You should feel a stretch in the back of your lower leg.
4. Return to the starting position.
5. Repeat on the opposite side.



Front of thigh (quad) stretch

1. Stand up and hold on to something stable for support.
2. Bend one leg up behind you.
3. If you can reach it, use the hand on the same side to hold your ankle or the back of your leg.
4. Take your foot up towards your bum until you feel a stretch along the front of your thigh.
5. Keep your knees close together and your back straight.
6. Return to the starting position.
7. Repeat on the opposite side.



For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call **Health Link** at **811**.

Current as of: March 23, 2021

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