

Lloyd's Wellbeing Centre

Helping you stay healthy, focused and motivated in these unprecedented times

The past few weeks have undoubtedly presented many new challenges to all of us, both physically and psychologically.

We want you to stay fit and well, so we've lined up a great panel of Health and Wellbeing experts who will bring practical tips and advice on a weekly basis to help you all the way.

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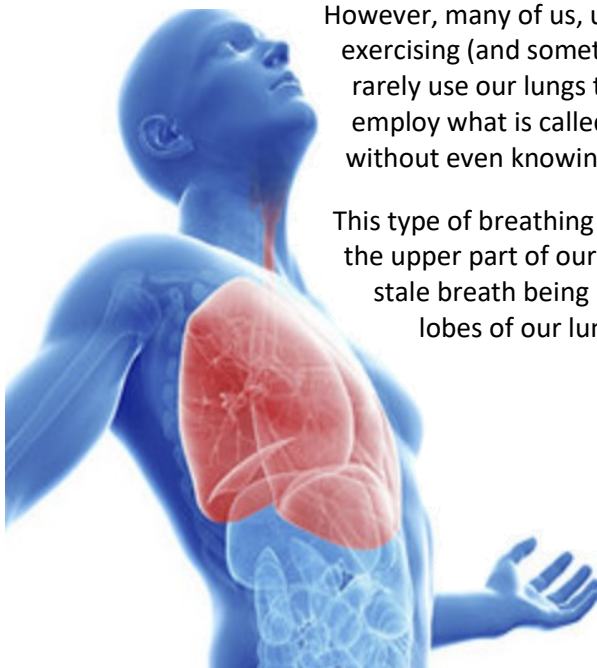
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WELLBEING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF DEEP BREATHING EXERCISES

Many of us are unaware that we rarely utilise our lungs to their full capacity; or that improving the depth of our breathing, through simple exercises, can help support our body's recovery process from a respiratory infection such as Coronavirus.

Breathing is, thankfully, an automatic physiological function that we don't have to think much about. Your breathing or respiratory system relies upon the use of several muscles including the short intercostal muscles that lie between our ribs and the large sheet of muscle called the diaphragm which lies directly underneath the lungs.

As we breath in, the diaphragm automatically moves down towards our abdomen, air rushes in and the rib cage lifts and opens to create more space inside your midriff or thorax area. As we relax our breath, the diaphragm moves up, assuming it's opened umbrella like position, the ribs move down, and air is pushed out.



However, many of us, unless we are actively exercising (and sometimes not even then), rarely use our lungs to their full capacity, and employ what is called 'shallow-breathing', without even knowing it.

This type of breathing results in us only using the upper part of our lung capacity resulting in stale breath being retained in the lower lobes of our lungs as we breath out.

Advice from the Frontline

Dr Colin Hamilton-Davies is Clinical Lead for acute cardiac critical care at St Bartholomew's Hospital.

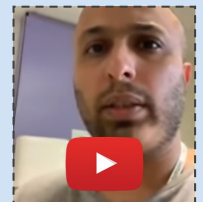


"Keeping the base of the lungs open is critical to helping patients recover from Coronavirus infection. I encourage all of my ITU patients, every time I'm at their bedside, to keep up with deep breathing exercises."

"It's important during any respiratory infection, if you are going to give your body a chance to recover, to keep properly opening up your lungs, even if it's tiring or painful. If you are at home with mild coronavirus symptoms it's also helpful to focus on those deep breaths too, and a good idea to become aware of your breathing and practice better quality deep breathing even if you are feeling fit and well."

"Coronavirus often makes people very fatigued, so they stop moving around, lie down a lot and sleep which just encourages the progressions of the illness. There is a large part of your lungs that lies towards the back of your body so when you lay down on your back this has the effect of closing down all the small airways deep down in your lungs. This is not helpful when you have a respiratory infection – you want to be filling these small airways with fresh air regularly to give your body a chance of clearing the infection."

Further to this advice from Dr Hamilton-Davies, here is a [YouTube video by Dr Sarfaraz Munshi and Sue Elliott](#) (Director of Nursing) from Queens Hospital ICU. It demonstrates this advice with a simple breathing exercise that helps to ensure you get a good amount of air into the base of your lungs.

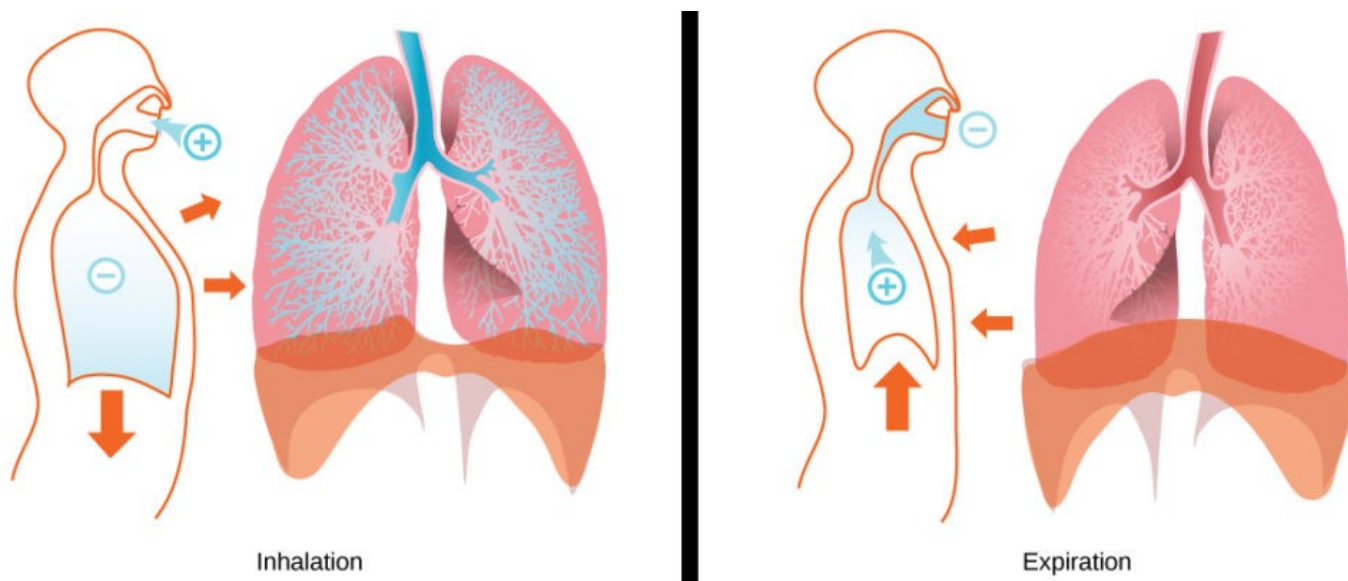


WELLBEING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF DEEP BREATHING EXERCISES

So, the advice from our heroes on the front line is, if you are experiencing mild symptoms of the virus at home (which include fever, cough and shortness of breath) try focusing on improving your deep breathing. Practice this every so often with simple, regular breathing exercises. It's also beneficial to give your lungs a workout like this when you are completely fit and well too.

Breathing Exercises to open the lower lobes of your lungs:

- Take five deep breaths in, filling the lungs to capacity, holding the breath for a full five seconds at capacity and then slowly release the air maximally.
- On the sixth deep breath, take the air in to your lungs maximally filling your lungs to capacity and then do a big cough (making sure you have fully covered your mouth with a tissue).
- Do two cycles of the above and then lay flat on your front (on a bed, ideally) taking slightly deeper "normal" breaths for the next 10 minutes. If you are pregnant it may not be safe to lie on your front and so you may instead wish to lean forward onto the back of a chair.



Knowing a little more about the importance of breathing is a great step forward to giving your health and wellbeing a helping hand through this difficult time. Look out for more information in the weeks to come where we will be talking about how breathing exercises can help you combat stress and anxiety.

Please Note: You may find it easier to breathe in through your nose as this warms and humidifies the air and is less likely to make an existing cough worse.

When you first attempt these breathing exercises sit down with good posture and take your time with building up to two cycles. Be aware that if you are not used to doing breathing exercises, they can make you feel a little lightheaded at first. You need to give your body time to get used to the new exercise, just like any other form of exercise that's new to you.

It's important to start off slowly with breathing exercises and only build up when you feel comfortable. Begin with only a couple of breaths and very slowly over a few days and intermittently through each day, with a few hours in between each attempt. Begin to build up to the full 6 breaths (for one cycle). See how this feels before adding a second cycle. It's important not to overdo it.

If you feel faint at any time, immediately stop the breathing exercise and come back to it again after an hour or so. Start from just one breath and build up again. If this feeling continues, cease the exercise and consult your GP.

Author: Janice Kaye
Managing Director, Thrive4Life

START STRETCHING AND KEEP FLEXIBLE

Many people are now working full time at home. It's important to try and ensure that your 'new' working environment and daily lifestyle work well for you and that you make all efforts to look after yourself.

Taking regular breaks and moving around during the day is an important part of looking after your physical and mental health & wellbeing. Medical research has shown that incorporating a regular stretching routine into your daily life will also bring many benefits to you including increasing your flexibility, minimising aches and pains, reducing the chance of sports injuries, and improving your posture. Try and make stretching a habit and be proactive about incorporating stretching routines into daily life.

Working from home fulltime means that many of us are restricted regarding physical activity. Stretching can therefore be a great way to help towards maintaining your physical fitness. Each week we will be bringing you lots of Health and Wellbeing tips to help you through this difficult time including a variety of themed stretching routines to keep you flexible and help maintain mobility.

Benefits of Stretching

Stretching is a low impact method of exercise designed to increase flexibility and tone the muscles of the body. You do not have to be an athlete to enjoy the benefits of stretching.

Why Stretch?

- Improves flexibility
- Decreases the risk of injury
- Increases performance
- Addresses muscular imbalances
- Decreases physical stress
- Makes you feel better

These 'Seated Stretches' have been specifically designed for when you are sitting at your desk.

They can be tried at any time during the day to help you re-energise and loosen tight muscles, brought on by sitting for long periods. Maybe try some of the easier ones on a conference call (without video of course!)

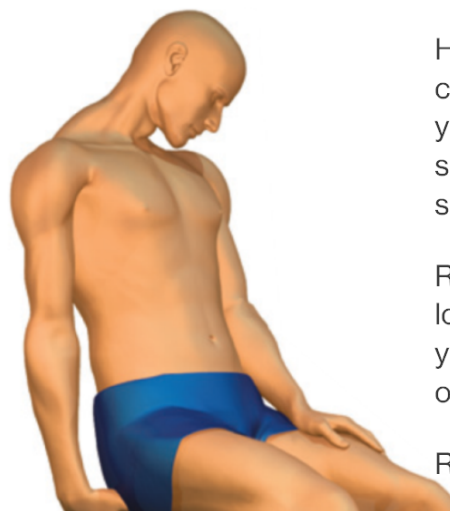
Before you stretch

You should be in good health to conduct these simple stretches. If you are in any doubt, seek further advice before stretching

How to Stretch

Position yourself as illustrated in each diagram. Stretch slowly and smoothly until you feel the stretch in the desired muscle. Hold 8-10 seconds to allow the muscle to relax, then try to stretch a little further before releasing slowly. Do not force the stretch or bounce. If you feel any pain you should stop.

1 | Neck Stretch



Hold onto the underside of your chair with one hand. Gently allow your head to relax to the opposite shoulder until a slight side-neck stretch is felt.

Roll your head forward slightly and look towards the same armpit until you feel a slight stretch at the back of your neck, then relax.

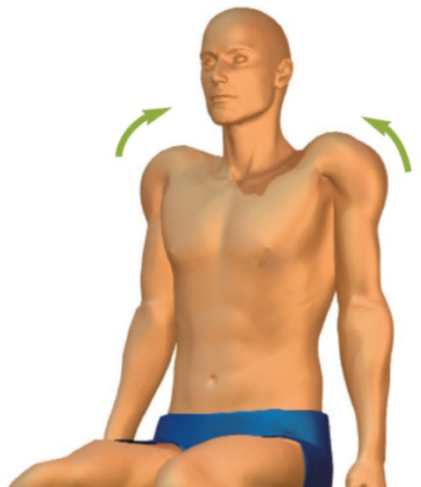
Repeat on the other side.

START STRETCHING AND KEEP FLEXIBLE

2 | Shoulder Shrugs

Sit upright, roll your shoulder blades down and back towards your spine and hold for several seconds, then relax.

Repeat this movement several times.

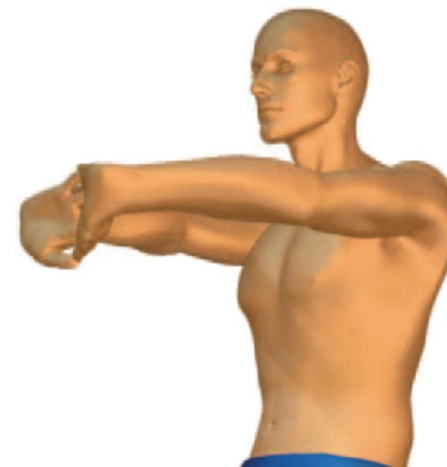


4 | Mid Back Stretch

Sit with your arms out in front, with the fingers interlaced as shown. Round your shoulders forwards and push out with your hands.

The stretch may be felt in the arms, back of the shoulder, or between the shoulder blades.

Hold for 6-8 seconds and relax.



3 | Back Extension

Sit upright. Place your hands into the small of your back and push your hips forwards, and your shoulders back, arching the spine.

Hold for 6-8 seconds.

Repeat.



5 | Reach Ups

Reach your arms upwards and interlace your fingers, with your palms facing up.

Stretch upwards, and slightly back as far as you can, to increase the stretch.

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SUPPORT YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM WITH THESE 7 SIMPLE NUTRITIONAL TIPS



We are all experiencing uncertainty and fear in relation to global and personal health. The World Health Organisation recommendations to cope with stress during Covid-19 lockdown include:

“To maintain a healthy lifestyle, we must include proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends”.

One of the most empowering things you can do at times when so much feels out of your control is to manage your health by taking charge of your diet and lifestyle habits.

Your immune system is the most powerful weapon you have against disease. Strong immunity means that the body is better able to fight off viruses and germs. Now is not the time to use alcohol and chocolate to take the stress levels down, as a treat maybe, but don't make these your 'go to'!

Follow these 7 simple nutritional steps to help you feel in charge of your health and support your immune system.

1. Eat Real food

Your body needs real, unprocessed food to stay healthy and not the processed foods you kid yourself are OK for you to eat. Focus on eating natural, unrefined, unprocessed food as much as you can and cut out (or at least cut back on) sugar.

That means focussing on eating meat, fish, eggs and vegetarian sources of protein like tofu, beans, lentils and chickpeas, and nuts and seeds, plus a broad range of fruit and vegetables.

Follow the 80/20 rule (this means eating healthily 80% of the time – think fresh apples rather than apple juice, or wholegrain bread instead of white bread).



SUPPORT YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM WITH THESE 7 SIMPLE NUTRITIONAL TIPS

2. Enjoy 'Happy Tummy' Foods

Did you know that up to 80% of your immunity to germs and disease is in your digestive system?

The mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue (MALT) in the gut is part of the first line of immune defence so getting the right balance between beneficial or 'good' gut bacteria and the 'bad' or potentially pathogenic bacteria is key.

How to do this: The gut environment takes a beating year after year, owing to poor diets, too much sugar, stress, antibiotics and other factors. Even if you have no obvious tummy troubles, digestive health is vital, so it's worth the extra effort to take care of it.

Add probiotic and prebiotic foods to your diet, as these re-populate the gut with good bacteria and feed them well enough to crowd out bad bacteria.

Here are some gut-friendly choices to get you started:

- Organic, probiotic, natural yoghurt – sometimes called 'live' yoghurt
- Always buy full-fat yoghurt, as the 0% or no-fat options have increased levels of milk sugars – and fat isn't the enemy, either in life or in weight loss
- Miso soup or miso bouillon paste (add these to soups and stews)
- Oats (soak first, in order to release the goodness)
- Onions, garlic and Jerusalem artichokes, olives
- Fermented foods
- Cooked, then cooled, potatoes.

3. Cook with Herbs and Spices

Adding flavour to food is a smart way to include delicious immune boosters on your plate.

Garlic is a potent superfood. It is antimicrobial, thanks to the active ingredient allicin, which helps fight viruses, and has been used for thousands of years to boost the immune system and prevent sickness. To make the most of allicin, crush, chop or grate the garlic cloves and allow them to sit for a few minutes. This releases more allicin. Once formed, it is fairly resistant to heat.

Most culinary herbs contain anti-inflammatory properties due to their phytonutrients, but oregano and thyme are particularly rich. Spice up your cooking with turmeric and ginger, too, as these are well-documented immune boosters.



4. Serve Chicken Soup

Did you hear that chicken soup is great when you're unwell? If you thought it was just an old wives' tale, you'd be wrong.

Research suggests that a bowl of chicken and vegetable soup can slow the speed at which neutrophils move around your body. Neutrophils are a type of white blood cell and part of the immune system, protecting your body from infection. When the neutrophils move slowly, there's a greater chance of them becoming more concentrated in the areas of your body that need the most healing. Studies have shown chicken soup to be particularly helpful in reducing symptoms in upper respiratory system infections.

SUPPORT YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM WITH THESE 7 SIMPLE NUTRITIONAL TIPS

5. Say 'No' to Sugar

Even if you don't consider yourself a sugar addict, it's worth taking a look at how much you do consume – and trying to swap sugary treats for something more wholesome.

Sugar fans the flames of inflammation and affects the ability of white blood cells to fend off viruses and bacteria. In fact, the immune system stays depressed for hours after consuming sugar, according to recent studies.

Enjoy raw cocoa or cacao hot chocolate on chilly evenings, adding your favourite milk or milk substitutes (with a little xylitol or stevia to sweeten, if you like).

If you really miss that chocolate hit, try a few squares of pure, dark chocolate like Green & Blacks or any good chocolate with a higher cocoa content (at least 75%).

6. Drink more Water

Ensuring you are drinking enough water is important for health in general.

When it comes to bolstering your defences, water is a miracle worker. It flushes germs from your system, helps your blood to carry plenty of oxygen to your body's cells and allows those cells to absorb important nutrients. Invest in a filter jug or bottle to avoid quaffing high levels of chlorine and fluorine along with your tap water.



7. Consider Herbal Tea

Green tea and chamomile tea can help supercharge your immunity.

That's because they contain antioxidants that help battle free radicals that wreak havoc across the immune system. In truth, we don't know how large the effect really is on the immune system but, let's say the effect is there but minimal, every little helps!

Re-Energise Challenge

14-day Re-Energise Challenge: 'Healthy Home Habits'
Nutrition & Lifestyle Habits to Support your Immune System

If you could do with some extra support to help you get good immune supporting habits in place for yourself and your family, look out for the 14 day Re-Energise 'Healthy Home Habits' Challenge which will be made available shortly after Easter!

The 14-day program can be started any day of your choice and includes:

- Initial health & energy review mini questionnaire to set your personal goals.
- Kick Start Workshop recorded video.
- Immune supporting family friendly meal suggestions, recipes, take-out guidelines, using leftovers.
- Simple immune supporting healthy habits, released daily during the program.
- Personal advice and support – private session 1 x 20 min by phone with top nutrition health coach, Marcelle Dubruel.
- Personal one-one Challenge support – private messaging to nutrition health coach throughout the 14 - day Challenge.

Author: Marcelle Dubruel, BANT, CNHC
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GETTING ENOUGH VITAMIN D DURING LOCKDOWN



The importance of Vitamin D



What's so important about getting enough of this vitamin, especially in these difficult times?

Vitamin D has several important functions. The most well-known function is its role in the regulation and absorption of calcium and phosphorus and its importance in normal growth and development of bones and teeth; but it's also **vital in facilitating the normal functioning of your immune system and resistance to fighting infections and disease.**

Vitamin D deficiency is very common, but most people are unaware if they are deficient because the symptoms are often subtle and non-specific, meaning that it's hard to know if they're caused by low vitamin D levels or something else. It's estimated that **1 in 5 people in the UK have low vitamin D levels – even when there are no restrictions to leaving their homes!**

Due to the Covid-19 crisis we are all currently under strict 'lockdown' guidance from our Government relating to when we are allowed to venture out from our homes.

The guidance on 'isolation' rules are, of course, even more stringent for those of us who display symptoms of Covid-19 infection, are living in a house/flat with someone who shows signs of the infection or those whose age or pre-existing conditions puts them at a higher risk. [\[See Government advice\]](#)

The result of this period of 'lockdown' and guidance on isolation restrictions, is that it's more difficult for us to ensure that we are getting enough Vitamin D, one of the vital vitamins our bodies need to function properly.

Why is this? Vitamin D, for good reason, is known as the 'sunshine vitamin' because 90% of what your body needs is manufactured through sunlight when it hits our bare skin and just 10% is absorbed via our food intake.

GETTING ENOUGH VITAMIN D DURING LOCKDOWN

Signs/Symptoms linked to Vitamin D deficiency:

- Lowered immunity to colds and flu
- Fatigue, tiredness and lack of energy
- Lower back pain, bone pain /low mineral density, muscle pain
- Feeling depressed
- Slow healing of wounds after surgery or injury
- Hair loss

Ways to Top Up your Vitamin D

From the Sun....

As long as you are not self-isolating [[See NHS advice](#)], if the sun is out and it's warm enough, try and get some sunlight on uncovered arms and legs. Of course if you are lucky enough to have a garden – you haven't got a problem, but it's appreciated that many of you will live in a flat/apartment, so getting out will be very limited to shopping for food/medical supplies or exercising (and as long as you are not self-isolating!)

So just be aware that you need to make an effort for your own health and wellbeing and do the best you can, whether it's getting out in the garden (the lucky ones!) or simply standing by an open balcony or open window to get some rays on your skin. The recommendation is 10-30 minutes in the sunlight several times per week between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. with at least 10% of your skin exposed* (although the more skin you expose the more vitamin D is produced!). Your exposure time should depend on how sensitive your skin is to sunlight so people with darker skin may need more time exposed.

From Food and supplements

I know shopping nowadays is a bit of a 'quick in and out' of the food shops for essentials and many of us are not in the mood to languish in the aisles looking for products. But here's a quick guide to foods rich in Vitamin D that you might like to stock up on: Cod liver oil, oily fish such as salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring, sardines, oysters, prawns, egg yolk and beef liver, cheese and mushrooms.

There are also some foods that have been vitamin D fortified such as cereals, yogurt, fat spreads and orange juice, milk and non-dairy alternatives. As explained above, it's difficult to get enough Vitamin D from diet alone, so if sunlight is a bit restricted for you at the moment, another source of vitamin D to consider is via a dietary supplement** (on-line or health food shops).



***Be careful with your sun exposure! You don't need to tan or burn your skin to produce vitamin D. You only need to expose your skin for around half the time it takes for your skin to begin to burn. Take care to cover up or protect your skin with sunscreen before your skin starts to turn red or burn.**

The longer you stay in the sun, especially for prolonged periods without sun protection, the greater your risk of skin cancer. Research maintains that it is possible to absorb enough sunlight with short exposures to achieve adequate vitamin D levels without increasing your risk of skin cancer.

****Always carefully read instructions on dosage and do not exceed. Food supplements should not be used instead of a varied balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle. If you are pregnant, nursing, taking any medications or have any medical condition please consult your healthcare practitioner before taking any supplements.**

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