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Understanding Isolation

A guide to social distancing and self-isolating during the coronavirus outbreak

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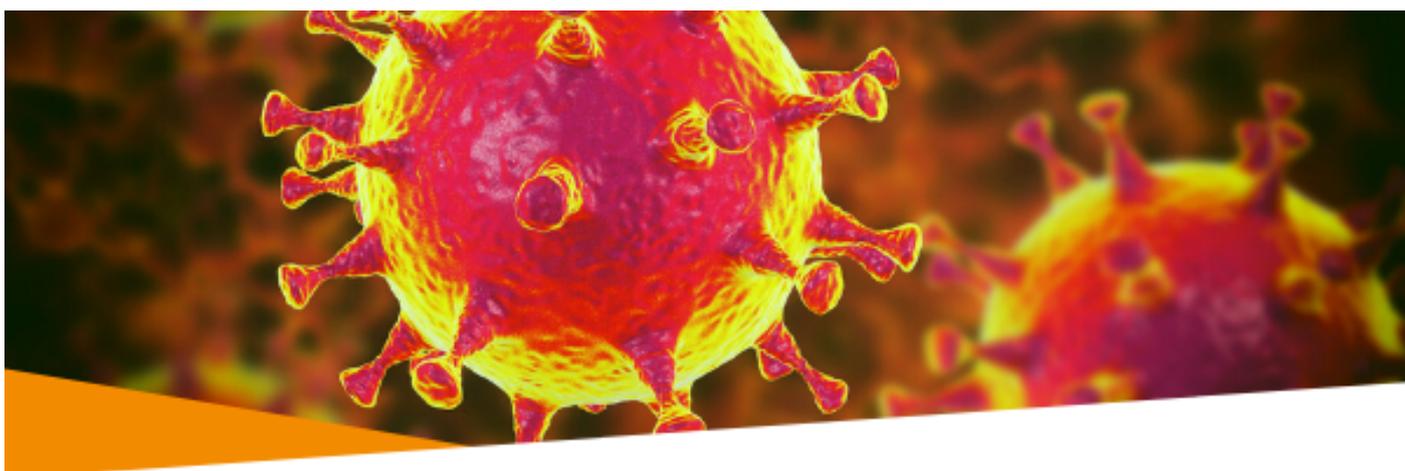
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Health

About Westfield Health

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We're dedicated to making a healthy difference to the quality of life of our customers and the communities in which they live and work.

We inspire and empower each other to be the best that we can be, so we can deliver evidence-based health and wellbeing solutions that support people, communities, and workplaces to be healthier.

We're proud of our not for profit heritage and are passionate about making a healthy difference. We have no shareholders, so the more successful we are the more we can give back to those around us.

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Introduction

COVID-19 has already brought significant changes to the way we live and work.

Now that we've all been asked to follow the principle of social distancing and increasing numbers of people are self-isolating, it's important to understand what's involved.

Being stuck at home can put a strain on us: it's a change to our normal routine combined with the stress of worrying about you or your loved ones becoming unwell.

This guide covers the difference between social distancing and self-isolation, what self-isolation should look like as well as plenty of ideas and links to resources to boost your physical and mental health whilst staying at home.

Understanding COVID-19

There's a family of viruses called coronaviruses that are common all over the world; COVID-19 is a new strain of this type of virus that originated in Wuhan last year.

The main symptoms are fever, a cough and shortness of breath. Sufferers may also feel tired and have aches and pains. If this progresses to pneumonia, it can cause breathing difficulties that require urgent medical support.

Like seasonal flu, it is more dangerous for older people, those with weaker immune systems and people with long-term health conditions.

As the number of cases changes day to day, the most up-to-date figures for the UK can be found on Public Health England's website.

Why are these measures important?

Though the public health benefits are clear, staying away from friends and family is really tough, particularly when we don't yet have a clear idea of when these restrictions may end.

When we're being asked to make such big changes and compromises to our lives, it can seem hard to follow them. It can be tempting to cut corners here and there, to go to the shops even when we're feeling under the weather or someone in our household has symptoms.

But following these measures isn't about each of us as individuals, it's about keeping us all safe as part of a wider community.

There are several ways that social distancing and self-isolating when you have symptoms keeps everyone safe.

1. Protecting the vulnerable

The first is that although we may feel confident our bodies can cope with the virus, we may come into contact with others who are less able to fight it.

This may be people with underlying health conditions that they may or may not be aware of, those over the age of 70 and those with existing respiratory issues, such as asthma.

There is also believed to be an increased risk to pregnant women. Not enough is known about this new virus to be sure about the risk, but, with other similar viruses, pregnant women have an increased risk of developing a serious illness.

Even if you're taking care to limit the number of people you see, you can't know who they may come into contact with who could be in one of those high risk groups. Social distancing and self-isolation minimises that risk of exposure for the most vulnerable.

2. Flattening the curve

The phrase 'flattening the curve' has been used a lot over the past few months, but what does it mean?

Flattening the curve is about trying to make sure that the medical resources we have are enough to treat everyone that needs care.

To avoid the system becoming overwhelmed, there is a limited number of people that the NHS can care for, especially when it comes to critical care.

Although most people will be able to look after themselves at home when they have coronavirus, recent estimates suggest that around 5% of the UK population will need hospital treatment for around 10 days - that's more than 3.3 million people.

On top of that, 1 in 3 of those people admitted to hospital are likely to need intensive care.

Flattening the curve means there'll be fewer serious cases at any one time, allowing the medical services to cope.

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3. Protecting the NHS

The UK has 6.6 critical care beds per 100,000 people. This puts us 23rd in Europe, significantly behind others in Europe such as Germany (29.2) and France.

Whilst these resources are usually enough, the rapid increase in the number of people needing care in a short period of time puts a huge amount of pressure on this system.

Some people think that getting coronavirus sooner rather than later seems like a good idea, but this approach would put more strain on an already stretched healthcare system.

If many people were to get infected in a short period of time, the NHS would not be able to cope and, like Italy, doctors would face difficult decisions about prioritising which patients to treat.

Flattening the curve isn't primarily about reducing the overall number of people who get the virus, it's about controlling when people get the virus and limiting the number of people who get it at any one time in order to reduce the burden on the NHS.

By flattening the curve, we can make sure that there are critical care resources available for everyone who needs them.

By getting the best care at the time they need it most, this will reduce the number of deaths.

We can all play our part in flattening the curve by following the latest government guidelines, practising social distancing and self-isolating when we're ill.

Number of daily cases
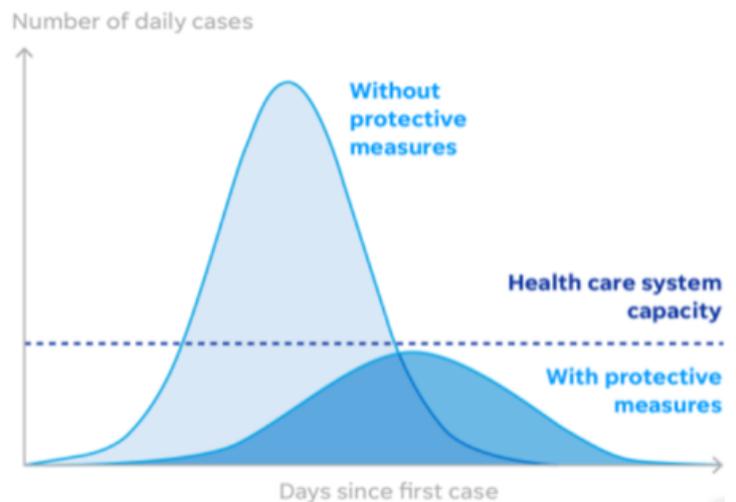
Stats at a glance

Around 5% of the UK population will need hospital treatment - that's more than 3.3 million people.

1 in 3 of those people admitted to hospital are likely to need intensive care.

The UK has 6.6 critical care beds per 100,000 people.

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Social distancing, shielding and self-isolation

As the number of cases began to significantly increase in the UK, the government recommended we all follow the principle of 'social distancing' as well as introducing other more significant restrictions on movement.

What are the latest measures in place?

As of Monday 23rd March, the UK government has introduced significant restrictions on movement in an attempt to limit the spread of the virus.

Everyone must now stay at home; people are only allowed outside to:
- Do food shopping
- Exercise alone or with members of the household once a day
- Get medical care or provide assistance to vulnerable people
- Travel to and from work only where absolutely necessary

Other measures introduced include:
- All shops selling non-essential goods will now be closed
- Libraries, playgrounds, outdoor gyms and churches are now shut
- All weddings, baptisms and other ceremonies are cancelled; funerals just with close family are still allowed.

"The time has come for us all to do more.. this is the biggest threat this country has faced for decades"

Boris Johnson, 23rd March

Police now have additional powers to enforce these stay-at-home regulations through fines and other special measures.

Parks will remain open for exercise only. There are to be no gatherings of more than two and police can use their additional powers to break up any groups.

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Self-isolation within the home

Whether it's housemates or family, it can be difficult to know what self-isolation means when you share your home with others.

It might seem impossible to stay away from those you live with, but social distancing at home can help limit the risk of infecting others, particularly those who are vulnerable including people over 70 and those who are pregnant, have a respiratory issue or weakened immune system.

How to self-isolate in a shared home

Do

- Try and stay away from others as much as possible, keeping a two-metre distance from other people.
- Sleep alone if possible.
- Make sure all members of the household wash their hands frequently and thoroughly.
- Regularly open windows in shared spaces to encourage ventilation.
- Double-bag rubbish containing waste that you've touched, e.g. tissues, and keep it aside. You'll be advised how to dispose of this separately by the NHS.
- Regularly clean surfaces, such as table tops and door handles, with a bleach solution.
- Wash laundry with detergent on the highest temperature advised for that fabric. Make sure to wash your hands afterwards.

Don't

- Don't share towels. This includes hand towels in other areas of the home such as the kitchen.
- Try and limit the number of shared household items, this could include things like toiletries or electronic devices.
- Don't have visitors over to the home, and if possible find somewhere else for vulnerable people to stay whilst you have symptoms and are isolated.
- Where possible, someone with coronavirus should use a separate bathroom. If that's not possible, try to create a bathroom rota where you can use it last and clean it afterwards if you feel able to.

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What does social distancing mean?

Where you do have to go outside for one of the permitted reasons, the principle of 'social distancing' should still be followed.

The overall aim of social distancing is to reduce the amount of social interaction between people.

Where being in contact with others is unavoidable, the recommendation is to try and keep two metres, roughly three steps, away from other people.

From a work perspective, social distancing means working from home wherever possible.

If someone has symptoms of coronavirus, such as a high temperature or a cough, then social distancing should be stepped up to self isolation.

This also includes people who have come into contact with someone who is symptomatic or has coronavirus.

	Who is it for?	What does it mean?
Social distancing	everyone	Minimising contact with others and maintaining a two-metre distance when you have to go out.
Shielding	high-risk people	Staying at home for 12 weeks to minimise the risk of exposure to the virus.
Self-isolation	those with symptoms & people they live with	Staying at home and avoiding all contact with others for 7-14 days (depending on whether you live along or were the first in the house to develop symptoms).

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Self-isolation

If, despite social distancing measures, you develop symptoms of COVID-19 it's important you self-isolate.

When should you self-isolate?

If you develop symptoms of coronavirus, you need to self isolate.

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are:
- A fever
- A new persistent cough

If you share your home with friends or family and one of them displays symptoms, everyone will need to self-isolate.

How long should you stay isolated for?

How long you need to self-isolate for depends on whether you live alone and if not, whether you're the first person in your household to catch the virus.

Use the following guidance or flowchart on the next page to figure out the right amount of time for you.

Please note that under the new measures introduced even when your quarantine period is over you may still only return to the limited number of activities specified by the government - turn back to page 5 for more information.

If you live alone

Current NHS advice is to stay at home for seven days if you have symptoms.

After that, if you still have a high temperature, you'll need to remain at home until the fever has passed.

In a shared house

If there are other people in the household, the first person who develops symptoms must isolate for 7 days.

Everyone else in the house needs to be isolated for 14 days from the day the first person developed symptoms as this is the incubation period for coronavirus.

If others in your household remain symptom free during the 14 days, they can then return to their normal routine, keeping in mind the current government guidelines.

However, if they develop symptoms they will need to remain at home for seven days from the day their symptoms started.

Depending on when they develop symptoms, this means their isolation period may finish before the 14-day household isolation or might go beyond the original two-week isolation time.

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How long should you stay isolated for?

Do you live on your own?

yes →

7 days
If you still have a fever after 7 days, continue to isolate until the fever is gone.

no →

Is it you that has symptoms or another member of the household?

me →

Were you the first person in the household to develop symptoms?

yes →

7 days
Everyone else in the house should remain in isolation for 14 days from the day your symptoms started .

no →

7 days
Everyone else in the house should remain in isolation for 14 days from the day the first person's symptoms started.

not me →

14 days
If you don't develop any symptoms, you may end isolation after 14 days.

If you do develop symptoms, isolate for seven days from the start of your symptoms.

I feel better!

Double check that you no longer have a fever. If you don't have a temperature, you can stop self-isolating.

Remember to follow the latest government direction on social distancing.

I don't feel better

If you're not feeling better after a week, you're struggling to manage your symptoms at home or you feel worse, use the 111 service .

This can be done online:
https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/

Keeping busy

Now that we've been asked to stay in our homes and only go out for a limited number of reasons, it can seem hard to know how to pass the time, particularly at weekends.

Whether it's saved commuting time or free time at the weekend, being at home can also be an opportunity to brush up on existing skills or even develop some new ones.

In this section

- Professional development resources

- 10 ideas for staying busy at home

- 5 free e-book resources

- Staying in touch when you're in isolation

- Staying active in isolation

Did you know...

On average, someone with coronavirus gives it to three other people

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Professional development resources

Although it might be tempting to spend all your time at home in front of Netflix, it could be better spent doing some personal or professional development. There are lots of online resources that offer remote learning courses at a low cost, or even free. Here we've listed some of the most useful.

Reed.co.uk
Price: from free to £££

Reed.co.uk sources courses from a range of suppliers and has many professional, regulated courses available for free. They cover practical skills like bookkeeping, customer service, people management, project management and equality and diversity. If there are any qualifications you need to carry out your current and future role, this is a good place to look. You may find that many of these will incur a fee.

Codecademy
Price: free

Programming is a hugely valuable skill in 2020 and social distancing could be the perfect time to take the plunge and start learning. Codeacademy offers learners the chance to gain a solid foundation in fundamental concepts across a range or programming languages. It uses interactive tutorials to teach practical skills and make your learning engaging and fun.

Skillshare
Price: free with a monthly subscription for premium content

Skillshare calls itself 'an online learning community' and has thousands of classes on topics including illustration, design, photography, video, freelancing and more. There is some content available for free, but most is only available with a premium subscription. The good news is they're currently offering a two-month free trial so you can try out some of their content for free before deciding if it's for you.

LinkedIn learning
Price: from £15 per month

Linkedin Learning claims to cover the most in-demand business, tech and creative skills with courses from experts in each discipline. They charge a monthly fee then let you watch as many courses as you like, and they're available in several languages. You can also advertise your new skills with a certificate for your Linkedin profile to show off to current and potential employers.

Google Digital Garage
Price: free

Google Digital Garage contains lots of online courses designed to help you grow your career or business. You can choose from individual modules or take a full course end-to-end. Most courses are free, approved by industry experts and are mainly digital marketing focused, but some cover more general topics like effective time management and increasing productivity.

Udemy
Price: from £12

Udemy claims to have the world's largest selection of online courses. You can choose from over 100,000 video courses that cover every discipline you can think of, from HR and business strategy to photography and design.

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10 ideas for keeping busy at home

When you're self-isolating but not actually feeling under the weather, it can be hard not to feel a bit cooped up and bored. Here's a list of ten ideas to help the time pass and keep mentally and physically active whilst you're at home.

1) Catch up with friends remotely

Normally, we're so busy with work and social commitments that it can be difficult to keep in touch with friends and even family. Use the extra time to make a list of people you haven't seen for a while and get in touch with them to schedule a time to talk. You could also use video calling so you can see each other and get the feel of a face-to-face conversation. Take a look at the section on staying in touch when you're in isolation for more ideas on how to maintain your social wellbeing.

2) Throw a virtual movie party

Sick of watching TV on your own? If you have Netflix, use the 'Netflix party' feature to watch a movie or TV show at the same time as a group of friends. You'll be able to have a group chat alongside your show.

3) Spring cleaning

It's the time of year when we start to think about giving our home a Spring clean, and this year there's an even stronger reason to have a sort out and deep clean your living space. Take inspiration from the now infamous Marie Kondo and streamline your home by sorting out that cupboard or doing that filing you've been meaning to get to.

4) Learn a new language

With the possibility of social distancing measures stretching on for several months, it's the perfect time to learn a new skill that requires lots of practice. Duolingo is a free app with over thirty languages all in bite-sized chunks, or if you visit bbc.co.uk/languages you'll also find lots of free resources for over 40 different languages. You could even find a tutor for online Skype lessons to really perfect your skills.

5) Keep up with your professional development

Put your former commuting time to good use and brush up on some skills you use at work. There are many webinars, training courses and other resources available to help you — flick back to the professional development resources section on page 11 in this guide for a full list.

6) Take up a new hobby

Always wanted to learn to knit? How about play chess? Or make your own podcast? With video tutorials on just about anything available on YouTube, it's the perfect time to learn a new skill. If it needs materials you don't yet have, use the time to do some research into what you'll need to get started and the best place to get it from so that you're ready to go.

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7) Get active

Being stuck in the house doesn't mean you can't still exercise. In fact, staying active is an important way to boost your mental health and immune system at a time when both are under pressure. Take a look at the 'Keeping active in isolation' section on pages 17 and 18 for more information and resources on exercising at home.

8) Be creative

Even if you don't consider yourself the creative type, some colouring or doodling can be an easy way to relax and distract your mind from any worries. Google 'Daily drawing challenge' for inspiration, there are even drawing challenge apps too. You could also turn your creativity into a thoughtful gift for friends by making 'hello' or 'get well soon' cards. If you're indoors with kids who are beginning to get sick of the same toys, challenge them to create their own new toys with household items like washing up bottles, kitchen roll inners and paper.

9) Try mindfulness

It's important to follow the NHS and government guidelines on isolation and distancing, but being in isolation can make you feel frustrated, alone, angry, out of control — many different things. Practising mindfulness can be a good way to acknowledge and accept those feelings, help clear your head and feel calmer.

10) Make a reading bucket list

Ask all your friends and colleagues what their favourite book is and compile a reading list of highly recommended favourites that you can start to work your way through. Our next section on page 14 lists some of the different ways you can get hold of new reading material even from isolation.

5 free e-book resources

Reading can be a great way of passing the time when you are staying at home. From discovering new genres to working your way through the classics, there are lots of free resources online. Here's a list of five free e-book resources that you can access today.

Oxford Owl
https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/books/free-ebooks/

Help your children learn to read and love to read with the Oxford Owl e-book library containing over 100 free e-books. The books have been developed for children aged 3-11 to teach them to read using phonetics. All the e-books are free to use, you just need to register on the website. The books are best viewed on a computer, laptop or tablet.

OverDrive
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Amazon Kindle
https://www.amazon.co.uk/

Amazon has a list of the Top 100 free e-books on its website that you can download straight to your Kindle or tablet using the Kindle app. You can also check out the limited-time free Kindle books that can be sorted by average customer review or publication date. Amazon Prime members also benefit from a free Kindle e-book each month through Amazon First Reads, with early access to editors' top picks.

BookBub
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BookBub is a free service that helps you discover books you'll love through great deals, handpicked recommendations and updates from your favourite authors. BookBub notifies you about free and deeply discounted e-book recommendations selected by their expert editorial team, from bestsellers to hidden gems. You choose the types you'd like to get notified about — with categories ranging from mysteries to romance to cookbooks — and they'll send you great deals in those genres.

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Staying in touch even when you're in isolation

Humans are social creatures, so being forced to self-isolate can really take its toll on our mental health.

Though we live in the era of smart phones and an always-on world, social media can be a bit of a double-edged sword, causing us to compare ourselves to those around us and taking its toll on our mental health.

Scrolling through scary stories about coronavirus and not knowing which sources to trust can send our anxiety levels rocketing. To help you stay in touch whilst you're in self-isolation and boost your social wellbeing, here are some positive, creative ways to use the technology that's at our fingertips to boost your mood and stay in touch with loved ones.

Make each other laugh

Struggling for content to send to your good news whatsapp group? Make your own! Laughter is an incredible mood booster. You could share a funny story or use social media apps like TikTok or Snapchat to make videos that'll make your friends and family laugh. Not only will you pass some time making them, you'll have fun too.

Create a mood-boosting WhatsApp group

Faced with a very serious situation, there are some very scary headlines out there. If we're not careful, we can get stuck in an anxious spiral about events that are mostly outside of our control. Though it's important to keep regularly checking the news for updates, balance things out by setting up a 'good news' whatsapp group. It might be something small like a great new recipe you've just tried or an article that made you smile. It'll also make sure you have things to talk about other than coronavirus.

Virtual book group

Book clubs have been growing in popularity over the past few years; if you're missing your regular catch-ups, keep them in the diary and meet up virtually instead. If you're not yet in a book club, try searching online for local ones and get in touch to see if they're going virtual at the moment. You can also find a list of virtual book clubs at readinggroups.org.

Share a meal together via video

Whether it's saying hi over a cup of coffee for breakfast or hosting an all-out virtual dinner party, video calling makes it so much more real. You can see people's reactions and feel almost like you're in the same room. Get in touch with friends and put a virtual dinner date in the diary, just as you would a face-to-face meet-up. That way, you'll have the pleasure of looking forward to it as well as enjoying a meal together.

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Snail mail

Can you remember the last time you wrote someone a letter? Make a friend's day by writing to them. You could even do something creative and make them a card to go with it or help them stay busy by creating your own crossword puzzle for them to solve.

Go to the virtual pub

People in Japan are reacting to social isolation by getting creative. In a trend called 'on-nomi', groups of friends are setting up virtual 'pubs' via video calling where they can catch up with each other over a beer. People are even extending it beyond their social groups, inviting anyone who might be feeling lonely to join their virtual pub.

Netflix party

Missing movie nights with friends? If you have Netflix, you could host a virtual film night or just bring friends together to watch your favourite show. You'll all see the film or TV show at the same time and will be able to comment using a group chat on the right of the screen. Find out more about how to set up a Netflix party.

Host an online games night

Missing the pub quiz? Set up your own right from your living room. You could either use a video call or try out an app like Houseparty that lets up to eight devices dial in and has built in games you can play.

Create your own cookery course

In need of new ideas thanks to a sudden lack of pasta? Sick of the cooking shows on TV? With a small group of friends, take it in turn to teach each other how to cook your favourite dish. Email out a list of ingredients in advance so people have time to find them or have them delivered, then use a group video call to walk your friends through it step by step. If you're really struggling to get ingredients, do a Ready-Steady-Cook challenge instead: take a photo of the ingredients you have and ask friends to help come up with a great recipe for them.

These are just some of the many ways you can still keep in touch with friends and family whilst in isolation.

Whatever way you choose to stay in touch, make sure it's something you schedule regularly to avoid feelings of loneliness from building.

Did you know...

Over 8 million people in the UK live alone, so even if you're isolated at home with family members who might be driving you a bit crazy, think about friends or extended family who live alone and how you can check in with them on a regular basis.

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Keeping active

Exercising will help you feel better, in both mind and body. Whilst going to a gym or your regular fitness class may not be possible, you can still get active at home without the need for any special equipment.

Exercises like press ups, squats, lunges and burpees require nothing more than your bodyweight and will really get your heart rate going.

There are lots of exercise tutorials available on YouTube, including yoga and circuit training. Have a look for one that you like and that uses the equipment you have available to you, if any.

It's important that it's enjoyable, otherwise you'll find it hard to keep up. There are also a range of free courses and classes available online through NHS Fitness Studio, as well as their popular Couch to 5K app.

Remember to listen to your body carefully. Warm up and cool down, and don't overexert yourself. If you feel any dizziness or shortness of breath you should stop and rest, and call NHS 111 if you start to feel worse.

NHS exercise guidelines

The NHS guidelines recommend that adults do 150 minutes of exercise a week.

That breaks down into five 30-minute sessions.

For more information on the guidelines, visit: https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/

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Eating well

Healthy eating is always important and ensuring you get lots of fruit and veg will keep your energy levels up and your body in its best condition. Eating lots of unhealthy food will do the opposite and could lead you to feel down and unwell. It goes without saying that you should drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. Drinking water can make you feel more energised too, as well as ensuring your body's working in optimum condition. It's particularly important if you're increasing your activity levels.

Get some fresh air

Except for those in self-isolation, at the moment we're all still allowed outside for exercise as long as we follow social distancing guidelines and stay two metres away from other people. Take this opportunity and get some fresh air - whether you walk, jog or run, the mental health benefits of a walk outside can last up to seven hours! If you're lucky enough to have a garden, use it for regular breaks to boost your mood. If you can't get outside, try to open some windows for at least part of the day to encourage clean air to move through your room.

Resources

Here are just some of the free resources you can use for access to free workouts during isolation:
- NHS Fitness Studio
- Joe Wicks PE lesson
- Yoga with Adriene
- Lululemon's Instagram live
- Fiit
- Own your goals Davina

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