

Staying well with...

High blood pressure  
& heart conditions



A COVID-19 wellbeing resource  
& 'e-signposting' guide

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## Staying well with high blood pressure & heart conditions during the COVID19 pandemic

### Stay Alert - Control the Virus – Save Lives

Over many months, since March 2020, guidance set out by the government has highlighted actions that **all citizens in England** must take to minimise the risks posed by the current coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic to the population.

**General advice** to the public is set out as below:

- stay at home as much as possible
- work from home if you can
- limit contact with other people
- keep your distance if you go out (2 metres apart where possible)
- wash your hands regularly

**Do not leave home if you or anyone in your household has symptoms.**

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

### What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 (also known as coronavirus) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered virus. To find about more about COVID-19 and to see answers to frequently asked questions, please visit: [https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1)

If you have further questions about COVID-19 and how it might affect you or your health then you may find it helpful to talk to healthcare professionals such as your GP or clinicians from any healthcare teams that may care for you and support you with your health condition(s) in addition to reading the frequently asked questions and reading information on the government websites.

### How do I stay alert and keep safe if I have hypertension and/or a heart condition?

The best way to find out how to stay alert and keep safe if you have an underlying health condition is to:

1. **Talk to a healthcare professional** who is involved in monitoring and supporting you to care for yourself with your health condition (e.g. GP, nurse specialists or someone else from your medical team).
2. **Visit physical health charity websites** that have worked with the NHS to produce COVID-19 advice: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/other-conditions-and-coronavirus/>
3. **Visit the government website** which contains clear and detailed information about how to protect yourself and stay alert if you have an underlying health condition: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing#clinically-vulnerable-people>

### COVID-19 vulnerable groups

There are certain groups of people who are more 'vulnerable' to COVID-19, meaning that there is a **higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 if they were to get the virus**.

Having **high blood pressure (also known as hypertension) and/ or heart conditions** makes you more 'vulnerable' to COVID-19 as defined above. There are two COVID-19 vulnerable groups. It is important to find out which group you are in, if you do not know, and what steps you need to take to protect yourself and those around you from COVID-19.

There are two COVID-19 'vulnerable' groups:

- A **clinically vulnerable** group: this includes particular groups of individuals such as those with certain physical health conditions (*this applies to some people with high blood pressure and/ or heart conditions*), those aged over 70, those with a BMI of 40 or above and pregnant women.

The people in this 'vulnerable' group are **strongly advised** to engage in "social distancing". Support for people in this group is available via NHS volunteers (Web: <https://volunteering.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/nhs-volunteer-responders-portal/isolating>; Tel: 0808 196 3646) or through local councils).

For updates or more information visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing#clinically-vulnerable-people>

- An **extremely vulnerable** group: this includes individuals with specific physical health conditions or needs (*this applies to some people with high blood pressure and/or heart conditions*; particularly if you have had a heart transplant at any time or you are pregnant and have had significant heart disease).

The people in this ‘**extremely vulnerable**’ group are ***strongly advised*** to engage in “**shielding**”. Guidance on this will be reviewed and updated over time in line with changes to COVID-19 infection rates. People in this group are also able to register online (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable>) or call **0800 028 8327** for additional support.

For updates and more information visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

**If this applies to you, you should receive letters, texts or advice from your GP or your hospital/community healthcare team telling you to “shield” and informing you of updates to shielding guidance.** If you feel you should be in this group and have not heard or you are unsure, then please contact your GP or your specialist medical team who can talk about this with you.

## COVID-19 support & information

For more information on COVID-19 and **high blood pressure and/ or heart conditions** please see the British Heart Foundation website:

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-you>

For answers to questions about **high blood pressure and/ or heart conditions** and COVID-19 risk visit: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/news/coronavirus-and-your-health#Heading2>

For **translated** information (in 60 languages) about COVID-19 and vulnerability groups visit: <https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/>

For **employment support/ support hub** English & translated guidance visit: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/employment-rights-hub>

For further information and guidance for **non-UK nationals** visit: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/eu-londoners-hub/information-coronavirus-covid-19-non-uk-nationals>

## Staying well during this time: some wellbeing advice

With everything that is going on at the moment in the world, this can be a very **scary** and **uncertain** time, especially for those with long-term health problems such as **high blood pressure and/ or heart conditions** whereby you still have to arrange and receive treatments for your condition while also being encouraged to stay at home.

It can be additionally difficult if you have parents, a partner and/or children to care for, as well as following all of the guidance and taking care of yourself and your health.

We all have **different reserves for coping** with challenges – we all have different sized buckets!



<https://mentalhealth-uk.org/blog/the-stress-bucket/>

A pandemic like we are going through with COVID-19 is one very significant challenge with lots of stress taps and our buckets are different sizes, so we all have different ways of coping to relive the stress in our buckets for coping with COVID-19 overspill.

Below are some simple tips and information to help anyone with **high blood pressure and/ or heart conditions** to cope during the current pandemic:

## 1. Seek out practical support and help with shopping and groceries so that you don't have to leave the house to do this yourself, where possible.

You may have friends or family who can shop for you and drop items off for you or there are a number of NHS/ non-NHS volunteers offering this type of support locally – if you are in the “**extremely vulnerable**” category then consider registering with the Government for support with your shopping and your local council will offer you specific support with your shopping: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable>

### Get coronavirus support as an extremely vulnerable person

Register if you have a medical condition that makes you extremely vulnerable to coronavirus. For example, you'll be able to ask for help getting deliveries of essential supplies like food.

If you're not sure whether your medical condition makes you extremely vulnerable, register anyway.

You can register yourself, or on behalf of someone else.

**Start now >**

#### Related content

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): what you need to do](#)

If you need help with food deliveries, please call the council and the numbers below:

If you live in North Islington: **020 7527 4075**

If you live in central Islington: **020 7527 8157**

If you live in South Islington: **020 7527 3788**

If you live in Camden, you can register for emergency food packages here: <https://www.camden.gov.uk/emergency-food-packages-covid19/-/coronavirus-?inheritRedirect=true>

There are also several charities available to help, for more details please see the COVID resources pack for your borough.

**As of 31<sup>st</sup> July, the availability of some support services may change.**

**NHS Volunteer Responders are available for help with food, pharmacy and medication needs – they can also offer a friendly chat with someone new. Call 0808 196 3646 (8am to 8pm) to arrange volunteer support. This will remain available after 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020.**

2. **Think about how you can get prescriptions delivered to your home.** Ask your pharmacist, GP or consider using some of these services:
  - <https://codapharmacy.co.uk/NHSPrescription>
  - <https://www.pharmacy2u.co.uk/prescriptions/electronic-prescription-service-nhs>
3. **Continue to look after your health in all ways possible.** This includes taking up regular, daily exercise at home, creating a routine for yourself at home with regards to activities and meals, eating healthily and minimising snacking, continuing to “attend” any virtual or telephone outpatient appointments that may have been arranged for you. Don’t let your health routines slide because this will keep you healthy and well during this important time.
4. **Look after your emotional wellbeing too.** This includes taking regular breaks if you are working from home and/or caring for parents, a partner or young people. Also making time for yourself and doing a “self-care check in” – you can ask yourself “what is one kind thing I can do for myself today?” or promise to spend 15-30 minutes doing something nice for yourself.

Here are some other ways of looking after your emotional wellbeing:

**Create a daily routine for your time at home.** Have regular wake/ sleep / meal/ break/ social (virtual) interaction times. Plan what you’d like to do achieve each day (e.g. work tasks, housework), include planning for fun activities like watching television, listening to music/ radio/ a podcast/ a TED talk, gardening, cooking, reading, physical activity, playing games, chatting to a friend on the phone or to a family member you share your household with.

**Find interesting things to do online. You could create a change of scenery (in a different space at home/ garden if possible) and try something virtual.** For instance:

- Online museum tours <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner?hl=en>
- The National Theatre offer free theatre showings online via their YouTube channel at 7pm on Thursdays: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUDq1XzCY0NIOYVJvEMQjqw>
- Online social activities: Pop-up painting offer weekly online events for anyone anywhere in the world <https://popuppainting.com/live/> - this involves a social element to painting via Zoom from your own personal space. The national theatre and other platforms also offer online quizzes and games: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJQ160k\\_VN4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJQ160k_VN4)
- Virtual Zoos: <https://www.chesterzoo.org/virtual-zoo/>
- Virtual Aquariums: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCO5q5atAVIkBwthxgTpxDog>



**Introduce mindfulness meditations into your day.** Here are some examples:

- Weekly free mindfulness sessions and others courses available via the Oxford Mindfulness Centre: <https://www.oxfordmindfulness.org/learn-mindfulness/online-sessions-podcasts/>
- Live online mindfulness classes with Women and Health counselling service: <https://www.womenandhealth.org.uk/live-online-mindfulness-class-for-women-on-tuesday-5th-may/>
- 15-minute guided meditation - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fz57mdSPgMI&t=1s>
- 12 free guided meditation websites - <https://www.heromovement.net/blog/free-guided-meditation-resources/>
- Sounds and thoughts mindfulness meditation - <https://soundcloud.com/hachetteaudiouk/meditation-5-sounds-and-thoughts>
- Mindful movement meditation - <https://soundcloud.com/hachetteaudiouk/mindful-movement-meditation>
- Mindful breathing - <https://soundcloud.com/icoperelaxationexercises/sets/relaxation-and-meditation-exercises>
- Other free mindfulness meditations: <http://franticworld.com/free-meditations-from-mindfulness/>

**If mindfulness or meditation is not for you then that's ok! Try a relaxation exercise instead.** Here are some examples:

- Diaphragmatic breathing - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BckGYBfN5e0>
- Relaxation and breathing exercises with Headspace - <https://www.headspace.com/work/covid-19>
- Calm natural sounds - <https://www.calmsound.com/>

**Take up learning something new:**

- *Learn a language for free with Duolingo* - <https://www.duolingo.com/>
- *Learn to write a song/ create music* - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z3dqhyc/articles/zrx3vk7>
- *Access a range of free online courses here* - <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue> and <https://www.futurelearn.com/> and <https://thecrashcourse.com/>
- *Take up an Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award (iDEA) challenge* - <https://idea.org.uk/>
- *Learn to program your own interactive stories, games, and animations here* - <https://scratch.mit.edu/about> and <https://blockly.games>

**Keep active!**

- Visit the Sports Health England website for various home work-based workouts- [https://www.sportengland.org/stayinworkout#get\\_active\\_at\\_home](https://www.sportengland.org/stayinworkout#get_active_at_home)
- Also visit the NHS website for workouts: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/move-more/home-workout-videos/>

- Moving medicine is a website that includes some helpful guides about physical activity for various health conditions: <https://movingmedicine.ac.uk/consultation-guides/patient-info-finder/?p=adult&c=ihd>
- Visit <https://weareundefeatable.co.uk/> an organisation that offers advice for people with physical health conditions who want to get more active - personal stories are combined with practical advice
- Consider seated exercises if you want less intensive physical activity: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/>
- Visit <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/brand/p087wddm> for other gentle exercises
- Consider *mindful yoga* via Yoga Nidra app - <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/yoga-nidra-relaxation-lite/id444707986>; via Women and Health counselling service's weekly yoga schedule - <https://www.womenandhealth.org.uk/30853-2/>; via Youtube videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pYoDdUijY8> and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PElmyy\\_kwN0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PElmyy_kwN0); or via the Down Dog app (this includes a free trial; some paid features on offer at discounted prices and some free options for students, teachers and healthcare workers) <https://www.downdogapp.com/>
- Join The Body Coach Joe Wickes' daily PE sessions - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAxW1XT0iEJo0TYIRfn6rYQ>

**Don't spend too much time watching the news.** Try to limit yourself to two or three news updates a day only and make sure that these are from trusted sources such as the government, NHS and/ or charity websites. Think about other ways to manage or think about the COVID situations – **Dr Russ Harris**, author of The Happiness Trap offers tips on how to 'FACE COVID' and respond effectively:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1\\_O8grFdwMDuGVIE\\_RvdRfhHhf6xf3tY8/view?fbclid=IwAR1jZbhDZgB5MxX6kdRQVM4finmCz-MVx45q5Ffj4on5RTaTiZvFj7oYBLo](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_O8grFdwMDuGVIE_RvdRfhHhf6xf3tY8/view?fbclid=IwAR1jZbhDZgB5MxX6kdRQVM4finmCz-MVx45q5Ffj4on5RTaTiZvFj7oYBLo)

**Try to wind down before bedtime to have a good night's sleep.** Reduce stress and boost your immune system with plenty of down time, especially in the evening whilst winding down for sleep. Have a warm drink rather than alcohol and avoid looking at news reports in the evenings – instead wind down by watching or reading something entertaining or by talking to friends.

**If you find yourself worrying a great deal, remind yourself that you are an expert in your health condition, and you know how to look after yourself.** Remind yourself that worrying thoughts are just thoughts not facts and thoughts will pass. Bring yourself into the present moment where everything is calm, noticing everything around you and slow your breathing. Then, when you are ready, carry on with what you were doing.

**Make time to play games and puzzles either alone, with children/ friends/ partners or other family members** - <https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/category/play-and-win/games/> or <https://www.sporcle.com/>

**Listen to a TED talk** <https://www.ted.com/>

**Or a podcast**

**If you have a garden and children or young people, consider some adventure activities that involve the outdoors with them** - <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2020/03/kids-nature-activities-self-isolation/>

**Visit websites that focus on how to promote good wellbeing:**

- Mind Charity - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>
- Mental Health Foundation charity - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy - <https://www.bacp.co.uk/news/news-from-bacp/2020/28-february-coronavirus-anxiety-how-to-cope-if-you-re-feeling-anxious-about-the-outbreak/>
- Happiful Magazine - <https://happiful.com/coronavirus-ways-to-help/>
- World Health Organisation coping with stress poster - [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a\\_2](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a_2)
- World Health Organisation helping children to cope with stress poster - [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff\\_2](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff_2)

**Consider reaching out and socialising via online communities linked to your health condition or your mood. For instance:**

Online groups and events:

Cardiomyopathy Friday coffee and catch up online sessions along with other online support groups and events: <https://www.cardiomyopathy.org/shared-experiences/support-groups>

Online Forums:

British Heart Foundation forum via 'health-unlocked' website:

<https://healthunlocked.com/bhf>

Arrhythmia Alliance forum via 'health-unlocked' website:

<https://healthunlocked.com/heartrhythmcharity>

Search social media pages for charities (e.g. Twitter, Facebook):

Heart failure charity 'Pumping Marvellous' have a number of social media platforms

Cardiomyopathy UK: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/cardiomyopathyassociation/>

You may also find it helpful to look up support in your area via the British Heart Foundation support group pages:

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/heart-support-groups/find-your-local-heart-support-group> and at their London support group guide: [https://www.bhf.org.uk/-/media/files/heart-voices/heart-support-groups/bhf\\_hsg\\_london\\_2019.pdf?la=en](https://www.bhf.org.uk/-/media/files/heart-voices/heart-support-groups/bhf_hsg_london_2019.pdf?la=en)

**Ask if you feel you need more help!** If you feel you need some psychological support or help during the COVID19 pandemic then talk to your GP or medical team.

Please note that some services are offering reduced services or suspended services during the COVID-19 pandemic, however iCope are offering brief psychological support for people who in the ‘**vulnerable**’ and ‘**extremely vulnerable**’ groups: <https://www.icope.nhs.uk/>

We hope you have found this range of coping tips and techniques helpful! **They only work** to help you relieve the COVID-19 related stress in your bucket **if you use them** so please make sure you do.

**Remember, you are an expert in your health condition, and you know how to look after yourself.** Take care, stay safe and seek advice from your GP or medical team if needed – be sure to let them know if you have any issues or concerns during this time.

Wishing you all the best for now!

### ***High blood pressure/ heart conditions and COVID-19 resources***

- British Heart Foundation: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/>

**British Heart Foundation support line, online chat and email** for offering information, advice and support with managing health and any related social or practical needs: Phone: 0300 330 3311 (open weekdays 9am - 5pm, Saturdays 10am - 4pm); Email: [hearthelpline@bhf.org.uk](mailto:hearthelpline@bhf.org.uk); Online chat: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-helpline> (available on weekdays 9am - 5pm).

#### **British Heart Foundation guides and resources:**

All guides available here: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/publications>

Cardiac rehabilitation at home: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/cardiac-rehabilitation-at-home>

Practical support pages: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/practical-support>

Corona virus – which news stories can you trust:

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/news/behind-the-headlines/coronavirus>

Heart matters activity pages: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/activity>

Heart matters nutrition and advice pages: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/nutrition>

- NHS and/or charity-reviewed apps to support people with hypertension and/or heart conditions (for access to apps visit the app store on your smartphone or tablet):

**FoodSwitch (iOS & Android):** app to support making healthy food choices: <http://www.actiononsalt.org.uk/foodswitch/index.html>

**PatientMpower apps:** apps to support people living with hypertension as well as other conditions such as COPD, asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung transplant, kidney transplant and vasculitis (patientMpower - iOS & android). For more information visit: <https://info.patientmpower.com/patient-support-programs#breaker-psp-2>

**iPrescribe Exercise (iOS & Android):** app developed by physiotherapists that creates a 12-week exercise plan based on health information entered by the user. It helps to improve overall health, along with managing a number of long-term health conditions through physical activity. For more information visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/iprescribe-exercise/>.

**Livia Healthcare app (iOS & Android):** an app to help manage conditions such as heart problems, diabetes and obesity, and make lifestyle changes using self-monitoring. For more information visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/liva-uk/>

- Pulmonary Hypertension Association: <https://www.phauk.org/coronavirus-pulmonary-hypertension/>
- Blood Pressure UK charity: <http://www.bloodpressureuk.org/Home>

**Blood pressure UK guides and information:**

<http://www.bloodpressureuk.org/BloodPressureandyou>

**'Introducing high blood pressure' translated guides (32 languages):**

<http://www.bloodpressureuk.org/HealthProfessionals/Otherlanguages>

- HEART UK The Cholesterol Charity: <https://www.heartuk.org.uk/news/coronavirus>
- Pumping Marvellous Foundation Charity (UK patient-led charity for people with heart failure): <https://pumpingmarvellous.org/heart-failure-toolkit/>

- Arrhythmia Alliance (coalition of charities):  
<https://www.hearhythmalliance.org/aa/uk/for-patients>

**COVID-19 educational videos:** <https://www.hearhythmalliance.org/aa/uk/covid-19-videos>  
**and patient information:** <https://www.hearhythmalliance.org/aa/uk/covid-19-patient-information>

- Heart failure Matters (website supported by European Society of Cardiology):  
[https://www.heartfailurematters.org/en\\_GB/](https://www.heartfailurematters.org/en_GB/)
- Cardiomyopathy UK: <https://www.cardiomyopathy.org/>

**Helpline and email support:** with expert cardiomyopathy support nurses available to answer questions (available Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30pm). Phone: 0800 018 1024; Email: [supportnurse@cardiomyopathy.org](mailto:supportnurse@cardiomyopathy.org).

**Downloadable resources and guides:**  
<https://www.cardiomyopathy.org/booklets/download-our-booklets>

- My Heart (website by Cardiac Risk in the Young, CRY, charity) provides personalised help, support, and information to individuals aged 18-35 who have been diagnosed with a potentially life-threatening inherited or congenital cardiac condition: <https://www.myheart.org.uk/>

**Frequently asked questions, videos and resources available:**  
<https://www.myheart.org.uk/faqs/> and also via joining as a member/ joining private social media groups (e.g. Facebook).

- British Society for Heart Failure website (for COVID-19 information and updates):  
<https://www.bsh.org.uk/resources/bsh-covid-19-resources/>

*\*\*Disclaimer: all apps and websites listed are developed/ produced by third parties. As such Camden & Islington Foundation Trust takes no responsibility for the content of these apps/ sites or for managing the security of your data whilst using apps or visiting websites listed\*\**