

COVID-19: Guidance for older adults and their families

At this difficult time, it can be hard to know where to turn to for reliable information and help. There is much false information around about COVID-19, so this article is designed to help you find trustworthy information and resources to support resilience and wellbeing in older adults. The links (in blue) will allow you to delve deeper into topics of interest.

Keeping up to date

These websites will provide a lot of what you need to know about the changing situation. They will also show you how you can get help or help yourself or your loved ones.

- For the latest [government advice](#)
- For [NHS guidance](#)
- [Age UK](#) is a great source of general information with a focus on older adults
- MIND has lots of [wellbeing advice](#)

Staying connected to others

Having a chat to friends and family is one of the best ways of keeping our spirits up. So make regular phone calls or – to feel like you're in the same room - use a video-calling application like [Skype](#) or [FaceTime](#). For customers worried about bills, [BT is capping the call charges](#) and increasing internet usage limits during this time.



If you want to make new friends with similar interests to chat with on the phone, [Age UK](#) offers a befriending service. They match you with a like-minded person and connect you, so you are able to chat weekly. [Independent Age](#) has a similar service but you speak to a friendly volunteer each week.



It's also reassuring to know what's going on in your local community. [Next Door](#), an online network, helps you stay in touch with others in your area and it is also a way to ask for support. Or you may be more familiar with Facebook which also hosts local community groups.

Keeping fit in your home

Older adults should do some physical activity every day. Aim for a mix of strength, balance, flexibility and cardiovascular activity each week. You may wonder how that is possible when you are confined to your home, but it's

amazing how much you can do in your living room. [Go4life](#) has lots of exercise ideas to suit all abilities as does the [NHS](#).



Remember to drink 6 – 8 glasses of fluid a day; water, low-fat milk and sugar-free drinks, including tea and coffee, all count. If your activity levels have changed, your appetite may too, but remember to eat regularly as this can keep your blood sugar levels stable, improving energy and mood.

Finding things to do

Whilst no-one enjoys the necessary restrictions on our lives, it is possible to find some upsides: we can use this time to indulge our hobbies or even acquire new skills. Here are just a few ideas:



Why not improve your internet skills? Age UK has [step-by-step guidance](#) for everything from setting up email to

searching for information and finding entertainment. There are also useful tips about how to [stay safe online](#).

Research shows that gardening is associated with better physical and mental health. For those of us with a garden, now is a great time to be getting out there and benefiting from the exercise and the feel-good factor. The Royal Horticultural Society has [some great information](#) to get you going.



For avid readers, the current environment makes it difficult to access fresh reading material. So why not try eBooks and Audiobooks instead. They are available from the [library](#) or from a commercial service like [Audible](#).

If museums and art galleries are your passion, try exploring some of the world's best online at [Google Arts & Culture](#).

And don't forget [BBC Sounds](#) where you can listen to a wide range of radio programmes, podcasts and music for free. You don't need a TV licence. It's available via your computer, tablet or mobile phone.

If you feel now is a good time to learn more about a favourite subject - history, the arts, nature, the environment, science, languages and much more – why not sign up for a [free online course](#)? Or if making things is more your style, have a look at the

enormous range of cooking, craft and other projects you can learn to do on [Instructables.com](https://www.instructables.com)

Getting vital support

If you have a **medical condition** that makes you vulnerable, register on the [Government website](https://www.gov.uk) for access to deliveries of essential supplies like food. You can ask a friend or family member to register for you (they'll need to have your NHS number to hand). The NHS will contact you if you are considered to be at [high risk](#) from coronavirus but if you are not sure, register anyway.

If you need someone to talk to for advice or assistance, call Age UK on 0800 678 1602 and they will point you in the right direction.

Get medications without leaving the house. Ask your GP's surgery to send your prescription electronically to a pharmacy who can deliver to you. The process may differ between surgeries and pharmacies, so it's best to ask your surgery what to do.

Grocery shopping can be stressful at the moment with restrictions on our movements and many empty shelves. So you may want to benefit from the special times of the day the supermarkets are setting aside for older, disabled or more vulnerable customers. As this is likely to change regularly, please check with your local supermarket. If you can't get out and need a delivery, please be aware that online shopping is currently over-subscribed meaning deliveries can take weeks. It may be easier to

- register with the [Government website](https://www.gov.uk) mentioned above
- or contact Age UK on 0800 678 1602

- or contact your Parish Council, many of whom are organising local volunteering initiatives

Ensure you are re-connected as a priority in the event of a **power cut**. Simply register as elderly or reliant on electronic medical equipment with the [Priority Services Register](#). UK Power Networks run this service and can be contacted on 0800 169 9970.

Managing stress

Many of us are feeling anxious about the disruption caused by COVID-19. It can be difficult to adapt quickly to such a dramatic change in our routines. Some people find that following some of the advice shared above helps them to feel more positive and relaxed.



However if you feel you need additional help, you might want to consider:

- limiting the time you spend watching or listening to the news to lessen anxiety.
- following a regular routine. Writing it down can help you stick to it. Replace social activities you cannot do now with new activities, like keeping fit and some of the other ideas suggested above.

- enjoying the soothing effects of nature by setting up a comfortable seat near



the window. Opening a window will help you enjoy bird song and some fresh air.

- The charity MIND has some great [relaxation tips](#) if you'd like to learn more.
- You may have heard of the practice called 'mindfulness' which can reduce stress and low mood by teaching us to be fully present in the moment. Here are some [exercises](#) to try.

Resources for families and carers



One of the most useful things you can do for any older adult you care for is to get them set up on appropriate technology. If they can use a computer, tablet or phone make sure they are able to communicate, access the kinds of services we cover above and entertain themselves.

Many families and carers find it useful to set up a rota so that the relative or client

gets regular contact or help. If you are the only regular carer, it is good to make a [contingency plan](#) should you become unable to look after your relative.

For those caring for someone with dementia, [Alzheimer's Society](#) provides useful tips for caregivers as does [Dementia UK](#).

You may also find the following resources helpful.

[NHS](#): Picking up prescriptions for someone else.

[Carers UK](#) is a good general source of information for carers with specific advice for coronavirus.

Finally...



If you do not live with your relative you should be following current [social distancing guidelines](#). If your relative is in an assisted living environment, please check the procedures of that facility. Do remember to wash hands thoroughly before entering and after leaving the premises. And please do not visit your relative if you have any [signs or symptoms](#) of illness.

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