

## COVID-19: Information for our 13-19 year old patients

This letter is designed to be read by the 13-19-year-old person whose name is above, to support their particular needs in these difficult times. If you have received this as a parent, we would be grateful if you could pass it on to your teen.

The NHS has written to all those patients who are at high risk of hospital admission should they contract the Coronavirus (or COVID-19 if you want to be technical) to advise them to fully isolate themselves for a minimum of 12 weeks. Thankfully, for the majority of you who remain fit, healthy and strong, you will not have received this letter, but I am sure you are aware that COVID-19 can infect anyone, of any age and in any state of health, and people who feel perfectly well can be infected without knowing and pass it on to someone else who could get extremely ill. So we all have to follow the lockdown rules to keep ourselves and everyone else safe

As a practice, we recognise that lockdown is particularly hard on people of your age group – your teen years are a time for education, spending more time outside the family and socialising, and you have been massively held back from doing all three! We wanted to write to you and let you know we are still here to help you with any physical or emotional medical needs you may have.

We are trying to become as IT savvy as many of you already are, mainly doing phone/video consultations and starting to use texts and e-mails. We are starting to update and develop our practice website <https://kirkgatesurgery.nhs.uk/>

Currently, we will need to consult with you by phone or video as the best way to keep you safe.

We have heard some very good questions from young people about their healthcare and COVID-19. We hope that our answers help you cope with the restrictions that lockdown or self-isolation may have on your overall well-being.

### Q1. Is it OK to be worried about what's happening?

These are truly extra-ordinary times for all of us, the only adults who might have experienced similar events will be over 102 now! Information and advice is changing very fast and it's not surprising that each day can feel totally different to the next and that is unsettling enough. What's happening in the world right now can be quite a shock, and it can all combine to make you feel overwhelmed and unable to make plans even for the immediate future - it's very normal to feel anxious and unsure about things.

Maybe your exams have been cancelled, or your first year at university has come to a sudden halt, or school has been closed for the foreseeable future? Whether you're feeling overwhelmed, unproductive, anxious or hopeless, your feelings are justified – you are not alone in feeling this way.

### Q2. Can I call to speak to a doctor if I am worried about my health?

If you are feeling so overwhelmed you are struggling to function normally, or even getting urges to harm yourself **there is help available. Please contact us** – we are still open for business. Calls may take a little longer to answer on our switchboard, but we will answer eventually and direct your call to the most appropriate person to help with your medical query / need. **Call us on 01924420242.**

### Q3. Will my contact I make be confidential?

As a registered patient of ours, you are entitled to receive medical support, care, and assistance from our staff. **You do not need permission** from your parents or guardian to make an appointment or chat to one of our doctors or nurses. Please be reassured that contact and discussions with any of our staff is treated with confidence.

**Q4. I have read that I could e-mail the doctor with a question, is this possible?**

As of April 1<sup>st</sup>, we are operating 'e-consult.' This means you can send us a question or concern and we will get back to you, on the same day, with a response. This is new for us and you will need to register to be able to use the service. If you are under 16, your parents will need to register on your behalf, but then you will be able to send a request yourself, and receive a reply back to your given e-mail.

**Q5. Will you have a record of my mobile or e-mail address if you need to contact me?**

With the increased role of technology in all we do now, it is very important that we have a current mobile and e-mail address for you, so that, with your permission, we can text or contact you directly. We may have an old contact or a parent's mobile number attached to your records so to update your details would help us ensure we can keep in contact with you appropriately and directly when you need advice or support.

Could you e-mail the practice [kirkgate.surgery2@nhs.net](mailto:kirkgate.surgery2@nhs.net) with your current contact details and giving your consent (permission) for us to be able to contact you by this means if you are happy for us to do so. Our staff will then update your records.

**Q6: I am a young carer, should I let you know about this?**

Absolutely - yes please. Whether you have been a carer of others in your family for a while or you just started recently because of COVID-19 we want to know when you are under stresses like these, so we can prioritise your care - please contact the surgery so we can make a note of this. And if you are finding caring for others difficult, if it's becoming a struggle to keep going or if you're just not sure what to do, call us, we would be happy to help.

**Q7. Social Media is giving me mixed messages and confusing me, how do I know what is true and what is false?**

Sometimes feeling stressed or anxious can be related to seeing lots of media coverage and new stories about the impact of COVID-19. At the moment, it feels hard to escape the news wherever you turn - although it is important to stay informed, it's also **fine to take a break** if you feel things are getting on top of you. Maybe you should stop looking at Insta and Snapchat? A horrendous thing to suggest, we know! Whatever you do, don't rely on social media as your only source of information - while some of what you read is trustworthy, a lot of it isn't, and it's put out there to scare and confuse you. Consuming so much of this information at once can be damaging to an already anxious brain and it's important to know when to give yourself some timeout to chill. If you can learn to control your use of social media (instead of it controlling you!) and stick to using it for positive and upbeat interactions with your friends and family you'll feel a lot better.

**Q8: So where should I get my advice and information about about COVID-19?**

There are a lot of myths out there about drinking water and taking silly amounts of vitamins and so on, saying they will stop you from getting Covid-19 or even cure it. These are not scientifically proven, many of them don't make any sense, and bottom line is they are just not true. Only take advice from trusted government and health service websites. These have all the latest facts and figures to give scientifically proven advice on how to prevent spreading, catching it and what to do if you think you have the Coronavirus. We've listed these below.

### Q9: How can I occupy myself to avoid boredom and feeling even worse about things?

Despite the loss of normal routine and activities, try to develop and implement a new routine that provides a balance of several different activities and interactions with others. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour, which can make you feel worse. Simple things you can do to stay mentally and physically active during this time include:

- ❖ Wake up relatively early – (annoying but it does help). Lying in bed until early afternoon will drain your energy levels and crush productivity. Set a nice alarm to wake up to and allow yourself more time to get ready and start the day properly.
- ❖ Stay connected to your friends and family via social media, email, phoning, and texting. We recommend video chats over texting, so you can see each other's facial expressions and body language, communication is about so much more than words.
- ❖ Social media can be an excellent way to share news, ideas (and jokes even!) with your friends and family. But be mindful of your use of social media – if it starts to negatively affect your mood, put your device away for a bit. Many smartphones allow you to set time limits for certain apps such as Facebook or Instagram.
- ❖ Occasionally social media can get really out of hand, if you feel like you are being asked to do things that you're not comfortable with, or you are being bullied or threatened, we can talk it through with you and there are some websites below to help you too
- ❖ It is important to maintain, where possible, some sort of daily routine. You should vary what you put into your routine to keep things different and interesting but try and include key elements consistently.
- ❖ Make a to do list (or schedule / rota) with reasonable and specific things included. Finalise your schedule / rota the night before so you are ready and prepared for the day ahead. Include spending time doing things you enjoy as well as things you need to do.
  - *Time to eat (breakfast, lunch and dinner)*
  - *Time to network chat and socialise, social media / gaming (IT based)*
  - *Time to do work, study, homework, coursework, learn, research*
  - *Time for exercise*
  - *Time for relaxing, personal downtime (non-IT based)*
  - *Time to spend with family*
  - *Time to spend doing something fun / different / activity based*
- ❖ Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water, and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and recreational drugs
- ❖ If needing to socially isolate, spend time with the windows open to let in fresh air, arranging space to sit with a nice view if possible and get some natural sunlight. Get out into the garden or sit on your doorstep if you can, keeping a distance of at least 2 metres from others.
- ❖ If you don't need to isolate, getting out of the house to do your daily exercise - walk, skip, run, cycle, skateboard, or whatever you enjoy - for an hour, (keeping your social distance to at least 2 metres from other people of course) has been shown to reduce anxiety and low mood and helps you sleep better.

- ❖ Some people find they can introduce fun activities for you and the family, it's important for everyone to just be playful and have a laugh from time to time. Here are some things other people are doing, you can probably think of more and even better ones!
  - *Themed meals*
  - *Special movie / Netflix nights*
  - *Quizzes and competitions*
  - *Kitchen dancing / Karaoke*
  - *When getting together with friends on Houseparty, WhatsApp, Facetime etc maybe you could invite other friends and family and involve them too*
- ❖ Getting a good night's sleep is **crucial** for feeling emotionally healthy the next day. We all feel better after a good night's sleep.

### Q10: What is out there to help me cope with this pandemic?

Here are some websites, apps and resources focused on helping young people navigate through these uncertain times as well as supporting your emotional and physical well-being. It's a big list and lots of them overlap each other but we suggest you check them out and find the ones that suit YOU!

#### Trustworthy UK COVID-19 information websites

##### NHS (nhs.uk) website COVID-19 advice

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

##### Government (gov.uk) website COVID-19 advice

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

##### Young Scot website COVID-19 advice

- <https://young.scot/campaigns/national/coronavirus>

##### COVID-19 Sleep tips from Evelina Children's Hospital

- <https://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/our-services/hospital/sleep-medicine-department/coronavirus-sleep-tips.aspx>

##### COVID-19 Sleep tips from the PHSE Association

- <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/sleep-factor---home-learning-lesson-plans-healthy>

##### Resources to manage COVID-19 for Children & Young People

- <https://young.scot/campaigns/national/coronavirus> <https://cypmedtech.nihr.ac.uk/2020/04/06/covid-19-resources-for-children-young-people-and-families/>

## Websites with a variety of Young People-focused resources

**Anna Freud** (Links to number of wellbeing resources, list of sources of help for those with urgent needs)

- <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind>

**Childline** (Help and advice on a wide range of issues)

- <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

**Health for Young People** (Advice & information on sexual health, mental health and long-term conditions)

- <https://what0-18.nhs.uk/health-for-young-people>

**The Mix** (Helpline, 24/7 crisis support, chatrooms, information, stories, games and apps)

- <https://www.themix.org.uk/get-support/speak-to-our-team>

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**Young People's Health.org** (Wide range of links to valuable resources)

- <https://www.youngpeoplehealth.org.uk/covid-19>

**Top tips for parents to help their young person** (What's that doing here? -Might be handy to show them the advice if you are having trouble telling them what help you need? )

- <https://buzzconsulting.co.uk/docs/PDF-Top-tips-for-parents-of-locked-down-teens.pdf>

## Keeping fit and active at home

### Free 30 day Yoga course

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jhKVdZOJM>

**Joe Wicks** – (250+ free home workouts)

- <https://www.youtube.com/user/thebodycoach1>

**Les Mills Free online workout classes:** (HIIT, Cardio, Body Jam/Dance, Body Combat, Born To Move and Meditation)

- <https://watch.lesmillsondemand.com/free-content>

**NHS Fitness Studio** (12 instructor-led videos - aerobic exercise (includes Belly dancing!) and strength and resistance training)

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/>

### NHS Physical active guidelines for children and young people

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-and-young-people/?tabname=how-much-exercise>

## Mental health and well-being

**Calmharm** (Free app to help resist urges to self-harm – learn to surf the waves!)

- <https://calmharm.co.uk>

**Clearfear** (Free app to help with managing anxiety)

- <https://www.clearfear.co.uk>

**Headspace** (Website and app to learn mindfulness, let go of worrying thoughts, free extended access during COVID=19)

- <https://www.headspace.com/>

**Kooth** (free, confidential, anonymous online counselling service for young people aged 11-18).

➤ <https://kooth.com>

**MeeTwo** (Helps you to talk about difficult things)

➤ <https://www.meetwo.co.uk>

**MindfulGnats** (Helps develop mindfulness and relaxation skills)

➤ <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/mindful-gnats/id973919092>

**MindShift** (Canadian app with advice managing anxiety and depression)

➤ <https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/new-mindshift-cbt-app-gives-canadians-free-anxiety-relief/>

**MoodGym** (Interactive program to help with low mood)

➤ <https://moodgym.com.au>

**Recharge-move well, sleep well, be well** (Program to help improve mood and energy levels)

➤ <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/recharge-move-well-sleep-well-be-well/id878026126>

**Sleepio** (online sleep improvement programme)

➤ <https://www.sleepio.com>

**Smiling Mind** (Free mindfulness and meditation app – learn to free your mind from troubling thoughts)

➤ <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/smiling-mind/id560442518> for info. *Get it from the app store.*

**SuperBetter** (Games to build personal resilience and boost physical and emotional wellbeing)

➤ <https://www.superbetter.com/>

**Young Minds** (Children & young people's mental health)

➤ <https://youngminds.org.uk>

## Staying safe online and in relationships

**ThinkUknow** (advice and support if relationships get out of hand, you need to report harassment, stalking or abuse or you're worried about a friend)

➤ <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

**NHS - Young Carers' Rights** (Your choices, your rights and how to get support if you are looking after somebody else)

➤ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/support-and-benefits-for-carers/being-a-young-carer-your-rights/>

**Zipit** (app to help you keep flirty chat under control and resist pressure to do things that make you uncomfortable)

➤ <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/sexting/zipit-app/>

**We care about you - please keep safe and healthy**

Yours sincerely

All the staff at Kirkgate Surgery