



Falkland Islands Government

Public Health Guidance – April 2022

How to look after yourself at home if you have COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19

We all know that feeling of extreme fatigue that sets in when we're sick. This is a common symptom and a natural response to help boost your immune system and give your body the time it needs to heal. Feeling unwell with any viral illness is common, and it can take some time to recover.

Most people with COVID-19, or symptoms of COVID-19, feel better within a few days, or sometimes a week or so, and are able to look after themselves at home while they recover. This document contains guidance on how best to treat yourself at home and when you should consider seeking help.

While you're ill, ask a friend, family member or neighbour to check up on you. Arrange a regular telephone call, or talk through a doorway at a distance (not face to face), so that they can check how you're doing.

Important: Please do not go to the pharmacy

If you have COVID-19 symptoms, we ask that you try to stay at home. If you need advice or medication from the pharmacy, please call 28065 or email PharmacyOffice@kemh.gov.fk

Treating a high temperature, sore throat or aches

If you have a high temperature, it can help to:

- get lots of rest
- drink plenty of fluids (water is best) to avoid dehydration – drink enough so that your pee is light yellow and clear
- take paracetamol or ibuprofen if you feel uncomfortable or achy

Providing you have not been advised to avoid ibuprofen, it is safe to take for a COVID-19 infection. Ibuprofen can increase wheezing in people with asthma, and can cause acid indigestion in people prone to reflux, so if you are unsure if you should take it, please get advice from the clinical team at the KEMH by calling 28000.

Treating a cough

If you have a cough, it's best to avoid lying on your back. Lie on your side or sit upright instead. To help ease a cough, try having a teaspoon of honey. However, please do not give honey to babies under 12 months old. If this does not help, you could try other over-the-counter cough or sore throat remedies. Please ask a friend or neighbour to buy them for you.

Best position for rest and recovery

Sleeping on your stomach, or in the “prone” position, has been shown to help people with COVID-19 as it is believed that sleeping this way allows for better expansion of the back and lung regions, which can enhance the body's removal of fluid build-up in the lungs. This can lead to improved oxygen levels, faster healing and less discomfort.

The prone position can look a few different ways depending on your body type. Firstly, try lying on your stomach with your head turned to one side, on a pillow, and your arms tucked beneath your chest. You can also bring both arms out to the sides for shoulder comfort. You might want to place a pillow under your hips, abdomen or your shins for more comfort.

No matter what prone position you're in, you should turn your head the opposite direction every 30 minutes. You can also use a folded towel shaped like a horseshoe to keep your head face down if your neck hurts turned to one side.

Things to try if you're feeling breathless

If you're feeling breathless, it can help to keep your room cool. Try turning the heating down or opening a window. Do not use a fan as it may spread the virus. You could also try:

- breathing slowly in through your nose and out through your mouth, with your lips together like you're gently blowing out a candle
- sitting upright in a chair
- relaxing your shoulders, so you're not hunched
- leaning forward slightly – support yourself by putting your hands on your knees or on something stable like a chair

Try not to panic if you're feeling breathless. This can make it worse.

Get advice from the KEMH on 28000 if:

- you're feeling gradually more unwell or more breathless
- you have difficulty breathing when you stand up or move around
- you feel very weak, achy or tired
- you're shaking or shivering
- you've lost your appetite
- you can't care for yourself – for example, washing and dressing or making food are too difficult
- you still feel unwell after 4 weeks – this may be what is known as 'long COVID'

Call the KEMH A&E immediately on 28051 or call 999 if:

- you're so breathless that you're unable to say short sentences when resting
- your breathing has got suddenly worse
- you cough up blood
- you feel cold and sweaty, with pale or blotchy skin
- you have a rash that looks like small bruises or bleeding under the skin and does not fade when you roll a glass over it
- you collapse or faint
- you feel agitated, confused or very drowsy
- you've stopped peeing or are peeing much less than usual

When you call, please let us know you have COVID-19.

Important: Pregnant women, Babies and children

Call the KEMH on 28000 if you're worried about a pregnant woman, baby or child. If they seem very unwell, are getting worse, or you think something is seriously wrong, call 999 – **when you call please let us know if they have COVID-19. Do not delay getting help if you're worried; trust your instincts.**

If you have a pulse oximeter

A pulse oximeter is a device that clips onto your finger to check the level of oxygen in your blood. Low levels of oxygen in your blood can be a sign you're getting more unwell. A pulse oximeter can help you spot this before you feel breathless or have any other symptoms, so that you can get help quickly.

You may be asked by the KEMH team to monitor your oxygen levels if you're at high risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19. If you're using a pulse oximeter at home, make sure it has a CE mark, UKCA mark or CE UKNI mark. This means the device will work properly and is perfectly safe if used correctly.

It's helpful to write down your readings, so you know what your oxygen level is when you first use the pulse oximeter and can spot if your level is going down. This can also help if you need to speak to one of the clinical team.

Important: if you have brown or black skin

Pulse oximeters work by shining light through your skin to measure the level of oxygen in your blood.

There have been some reports suggesting that pulse oximeters may be less accurate if you have brown or black skin, as they may show readings higher than the actual level of oxygen in your blood.

You should still use your pulse oximeter if you have one. The important thing is to check your blood oxygen level regularly to see if your readings are going down.

What to do if your blood oxygen level drops

Blood oxygen level	What to do
95 to 100	Stay at home and continue to check your blood oxygen level regularly, every 4-6 hours
93 or 94	Check your blood oxygen level again within an hour – if it's still 93 or 94, call the KEMH on 28000 for advice
92 or below	Check your blood oxygen level again straight away – if it's still 92 or below, call KEMH A&E on 28051 or 999 immediately

If your blood oxygen level is usually below 95 but it drops below your normal level, call the KEMH on 28000 for advice.

However, if you are feeling really unwell, it's important to get the care you need, so call the KEMH on 28000 if you are worried and struggling at home.