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## NEWS RELEASE

# Looking after mental health and wellbeing

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT) is working with local organisations across the health system to offer support for mental health and wellbeing during the Coronavirus outbreak.

There are lots of helpful resources for people to access online, and staff at CPFT's Psychological Wellbeing Service have shared some advice and guidance for people to follow at home.

Dr James Clarke, Clinical Psychologist and Service Lead said: "Whilst the outbreak presents not only a threat to physical health, it will also present a threat to psychological and emotional wellbeing which individuals will have to learn to adjust to over the coming months. However, we see that during times of crisis people have amazing strength and resilience to overcome problems and support each other.

"The team has put together our top tips for mental health and wellbeing during periods of self-isolation and staying at home. There are some key steps people can take to cope and maintain a healthy balance and routine over the months ahead.

"Where problems persist particularly after the outbreak has ended, it will be important to seek help from local services such as Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services or contact your GP to discuss other options."

Guidance from the Psychological Wellbeing Service:

### Finding information

Limit time spent reading about coronavirus and watching news. It is important to keep informed every day, but continually checking on the latest developments and news stories can increase anxiety. The same applies to use of social media – it can be a great way to keep in touch with others, but can also serve to increase anxiety and lower mood when every discussion is around coronavirus – and not all the information will be reliable.

When looking for advice try to stick to reliable sources of information, and get updates from the Government and NHS information pages:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

### Connect with others

Keep in touch with friends and family over the phone, through video calls, social media and online sites. Many local communities are setting up support networks online and through social media – try to find out what is happening locally or set something up yourself. Checking in on others, even if just calling a neighbour to chat can be really helpful for our own wellbeing.

### **Make a plan and try to stick to a regular routine**

Keep your usual habits going as much as possible. Try to avoid disrupting your usual sleep pattern. Attend to your usual self care routines of getting washed and dressed each day. Try to stick to regular mealtimes, and avoid drinking more alcohol than usual. Work out some form of routine and activity for all members of the household, and remember to find ways of having some time to yourself to relax.

### **Plan and engage in a varied set of activities**

Spend time on hobbies, reading, cooking, exercising, household tasks/chores, playing games with others as well as on computers, TV and phones. It could also be a chance to try and learn a new skill or to catch up on studies (there are many free learning and online resources available), or to take on those household tasks that have been put off (spring cleaning, wardrobe clear-outs, DIY, decorating).

### **Exercise**

If possible, try to remain physically active and make the most of limited time outdoors for exercise under the latest national guidance. Short exercise programs that can be done at home can be found online for all levels of ability or you can devise your own. Try to spend time outdoors in your garden, if available. Open windows to ensure fresh air, spend time sitting by windows.

### **Problem solve and plan**

Think of any practical difficulties that may arise like getting food and supplies, and try to make a plan to resolve these where possible. If taking medication, then plan ahead to ensure your usual regular supply is delivered or arranged to collect. Think of who you could call on for practical support. It can also be helpful to think of how we can support others to problem solve.

### **Manage anxiety and worry**

Remember that this situation will not last for ever and that things will get better. The evidence so far shows that the majority of people who contract coronavirus (and not everyone will) experience a relatively minor illness from which you will fully recover.

To manage overwhelming worrying feelings, try to use distractions like listening to music, watching tv, reading, cooking, making a cup of tea or engaging in exercise. It can be helpful to engage in activities that take a degree of focus – such as drawing, colouring, or puzzles.

### **Practice regular relaxation exercises**

Many guides are available for free online and it is worth taking time to practice different approaches to find the one that's most helpful for you. Examples of relaxation methods include breathing techniques, guided imagery and progressive muscular relaxation. Mindfulness techniques can also be helpful.

## Further resources

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy booklets are available from the Psychological Wellbeing Service along with other resources to support self care for mental health and wellbeing: <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/services/pws/useful-resources-2.htm>
- Guides on different forms of relaxation can be accessed on Youtube to help you practice progressive muscular relaxation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihO02wUzgkc> and squared breathing to help manage panic and anxiety: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAITJscAuy8>
- An app to help manage worry: <https://worry-tree.com/>
- Mental health charity Mind have published helpful guidance and resources: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

## What to do in a mental health crisis

**Call 111 and press option 2 for the [First Response Service](#)** - a 24-hour service for people in a mental health crisis. As a temporary measure, you may have to go through some Covid-19 related options first, before getting through to select 2 for the First Response Service.

This service is for anyone, of any age, who is registered with a GP in Cambridgeshire or Peterborough. Specially-trained mental health staff will speak to you and discuss with you your mental health care needs – instead of you having to go to accident and emergency departments of local acute hospitals.

You can also find some useful tips in our leaflet on ***Coping with Panic*** or other mental health leaflets available [here](#).

-ENDS-

## Notes for editors

### 1) About Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT) is a health and social care organisation, providing integrated community, mental health and learning disability services, across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and children's community services in Peterborough.

We support around 100,000 people each year and employ more than 3,700 staff. Our largest bases are at the Cavell Centre, Peterborough, and Fulbourn Hospital, Cambridge, but our staff are based in over 90 locations. We are a University of Cambridge Teaching Trust and member of [Cambridge University Health Partners](#), working together with the University of Cambridge Clinical School. Together with global, national and local partners we conduct high-quality and ground-breaking research into mental and physical health and support innovation to improve patient care.

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