

## Factsheet 18

Updated on 16 October 2020

## Providing advice to patients on COVID-19

### Introduction

Through the course of this pandemic we have learnt more about COVID-19. The following factsheet has been designed to help you build your knowledge around COVID-19 and ensure you are providing the correct advice and guidance to your patients.<sup>1</sup>

### What are the main symptoms of coronavirus and how do you describe this to your patients?

What are the main symptoms of COVID-19?	How do you describe this to patients?
A high temperature	This means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure temperature).
A new, continuous cough	This means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual).
A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste	This means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal. For example, if you are unable to smell coffee or other beverages that would normally have a strong smell.

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

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### What should patients do if they have any of the main symptoms of coronavirus?

- Get a test to check if they have coronavirus as soon as possible.
- Stay at home and do not have any visitors until they get their test result – only leave their home to have a test.
- Anyone that they live with, and anyone in their support bubble, must also stay at home until the affected patient receives their result.<sup>1</sup>

### What should patients expect if they test positive?

- If a patient receives a positive test result, they will be contacted by the NHS Test and Trace or someone who works for their local council. They will be contacted by email, text or phone. Text messages will come from NHStracing. Calls will come from 0300 013 5000. If patients are contacted by someone working for the local council, they will call from a local number.
- Patients will be asked for information about where they have been recently and who they been in close contact with.

This will help the NHS contact anyone who may also have caught the virus.

Please note children under the age of 18 will be contacted by phone wherever possible and asked for their parent or guardian's permission to continue the call.<sup>1</sup>



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### How to treat coronavirus symptoms at home?

At present, there is no specific treatment for COVID-19, but symptoms can be eased at home. In order to ease symptoms patients can undertake a number of steps to support their recovery. For example, if patients have a high temperature then they can:<sup>1</sup>

- Be advised to rest
- Drink plenty of fluids (water is best) to avoid dehydration
- Take paracetamol and ibuprofen (with no other contra-indications) in line with the recommended dosing regime.

If patients are easing the symptom of the cough, then the following advice can be given:<sup>1</sup>

- Encourage patients to lie on their side or sit upright. Patients should be advised to avoid lying on their back.
- To try a honey preparation. Remember to consider any allergies as well as age of the patient as honey should not be given to children under the age of 12 months.<sup>2</sup>

Patients can contact their local pharmacy for support but should be encouraged NOT to visit their pharmacy as they have COVID-19.

If patients are feeling breathlessness, then the following advice can be given:<sup>1</sup>

- To breathe slowly through the nose and out through the mouth with the lips together. This action is similar to blowing out a candle.
- Sitting upright in a chair.
- Relaxing shoulders, so they are not hunched.
- Leaning forward slightly – support can be obtained by putting their hands on their knees or on something stable like a chair.

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It is important to remember that feeling breathless can be a sign of a more serious coronavirus infection and therefore patients should be advised to seek medical assistance.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng120/chapter/recommendations#self-care>