

*This guide has been created to help you reduce some common symptoms of COVID-19. While it has been put together by physiotherapists, it should not replace individualized medical advice. Please ensure you have received medical advice from your doctor prior to partaking in these exercises. If you have any specific musculoskeletal concerns, be sure to book a telehealth consult ASAP with your local physiotherapist who can discuss suitable home exercises with you specific to your condition.*



## NECK TENSION & HEADACHE

Many people have reported that their illness involves or starts with tension in the muscles around their neck and a tension-type headache. This can be a symptom of the virus itself or a secondary effect from spending so much time in bed/ in one position.

### Things to consider...

#### 1. What is your pillow like?

A healthy person will spend 1/3 of their life in bed so a good pillow goes a long way already. But when you are spending even longer in bed due to fatigue and illness, it becomes even more important that you have a supportive pillow to help keep your neck comfortable and well supported. Talk to your physiotherapist about finding the right pillow for you!

#### 2. Have you been drinking enough water?

Dehydration can contribute to increased frequency and/or intensity of headaches. Many people who are unwell with COVID experience temperatures and are also feeling quite weak. They then sweat, losing hydration and also then lack the energy to rehydrate with water.

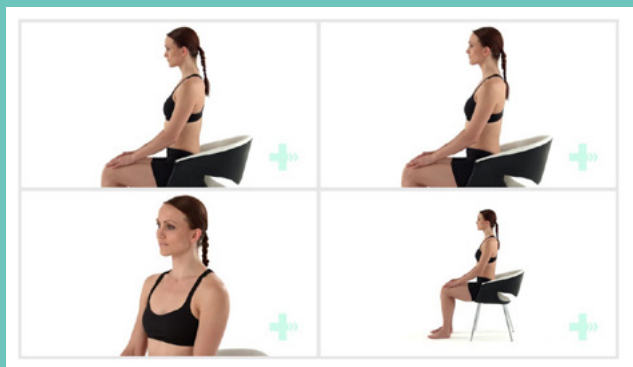
#### 3. Do you need to see your GP or go to hospital?

If your symptoms are severe and you are worried or concerned, you should make a phone appointment with your GP and discuss your personal symptoms with them. If it is an emergency, phone 000 or present to your nearest Hospital Emergency.

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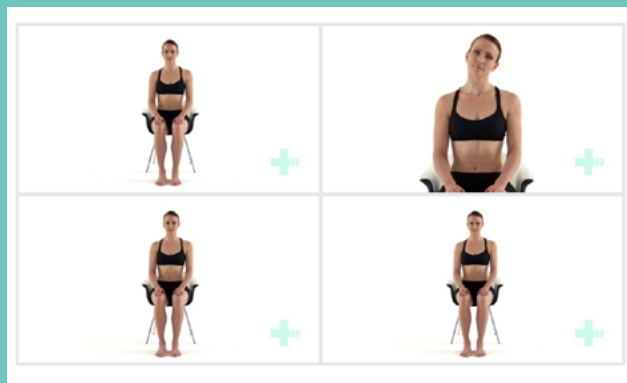
## CxSp AROM Flexion

Sit upright in a chair, looking straight ahead.  
Slowly look down at your lap, moving only your head, not your body.  
Return back to the starting position and repeat.



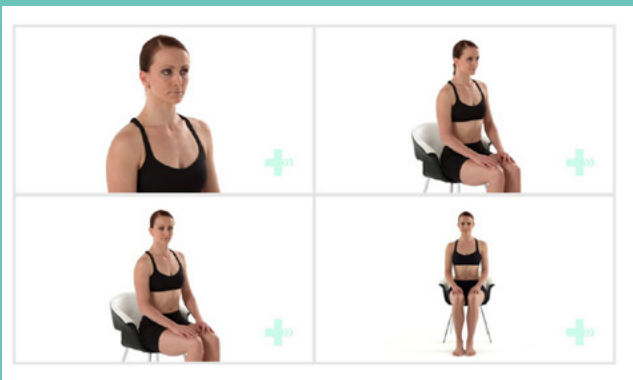
## CxSp AROM Side Flexion

Sit upright in a chair looking straight ahead.  
Tilt one ear down towards your shoulder, moving only your head, not your body or your shoulder.  
Return to the starting position then relax and repeat.



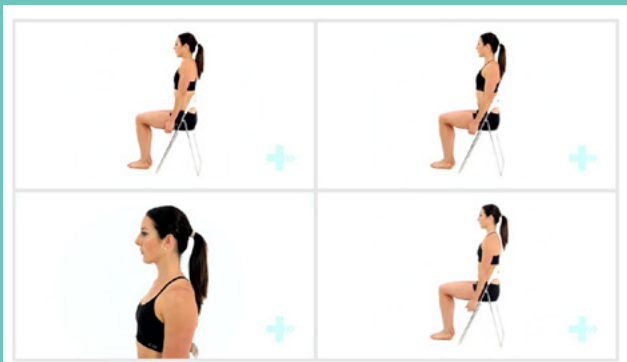
## CxSp AROM Rotation

Sit upright in a chair looking straight ahead.  
Look over one shoulder as far as you can, moving only your head, not your body.  
Return back to the starting position and then relax and repeat.



## Shoulder Circles

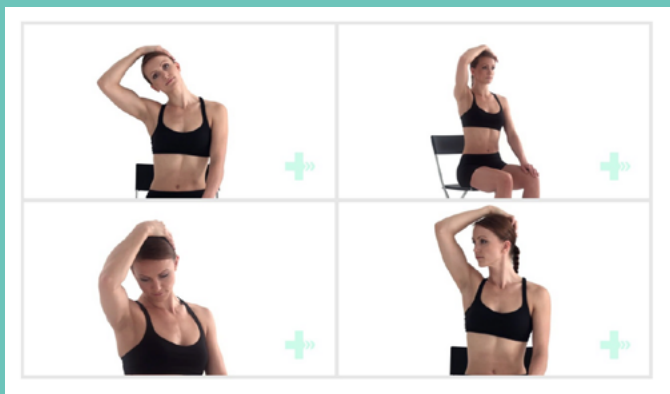
Roll your shoulders in a circle, pulling them forwards, up, back and down.  
Imagine you are moving them around a clock face.



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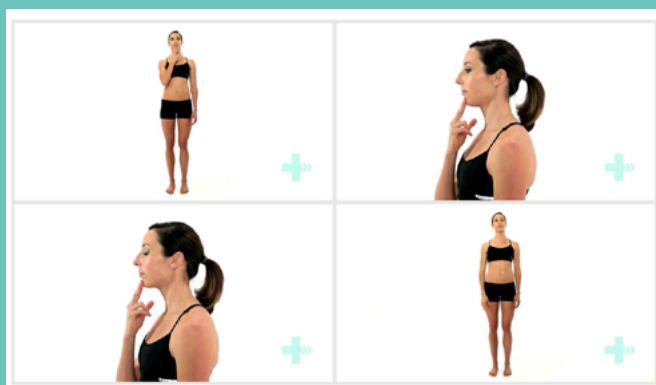
## UFT and Levator Scap Stretch

Sit in a neutral position and place your right hand over your head.  
Using the weight of your head only, stretch your trapezius muscle by allowing your head to fall to the side, controlling and slightly increasing the stretch at the end of the movement.  
Hold, breathe out and return to the neutral position.  
Turn your head slightly and repeat the stretch and then turn your head a bit further and stretch again.  
Repeat the movement for the other side.



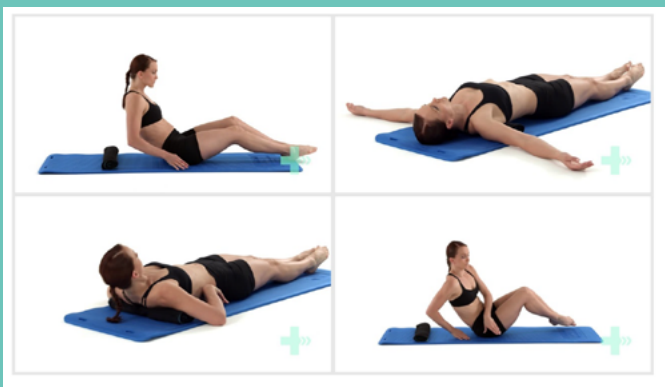
## Chin Tucks

Stand straight, looking ahead, and place two fingers on your chin.  
Push your chin so that your head goes straight back, lengthening through the back of your neck, and keeping your eyes forwards.  
Hold, and then relax.



## Thoracic Extension Stretch w/ Towel

Roll up a towel and place it on the floor across the area you will lie on.  
Lie on your back with the towel positioned underneath and across your upper back.  
Relax in this position, allowing your arms to drop out to the side and your chest to open up, stretching your upper back over the towel.  
Remain here for the stated duration, and then move the towel down to the next segment of your upper back, and repeat.



## What else might help?

### Heat Pack

A heat pack is often used to increase blood flow to an area and help reduce pain and tension

### Massage Cream / Heat cream

If you don't have a microwave or the energy to warm a heat pack up, gentle self-massage of the muscles using a heat cream can help

### Magnesium Spray

Magnesium is commonly used in a musculoskeletal setting to help reduce muscular tension and secondary pain.



## LOWER BACK PAIN

Aches and pains come with most cases of flu. Unfortunately, COVID is not excluded. On top of this, a large percentage of our population already experience frequent lower back pain! Stationary positions often aggravate our lower back pain. There are some simple movements you can do throughout the day while in isolation to help keep the lower back pain away.

## Things to consider...

### Have you got a previous diagnosis?

This exercise program has been created as a general guide for someone who has no contraindications to exercise. If you have a previously diagnosed condition, it is important that you discuss specific exercises with your physiotherapist.

### Do you need to see your GP or go to the hospital?

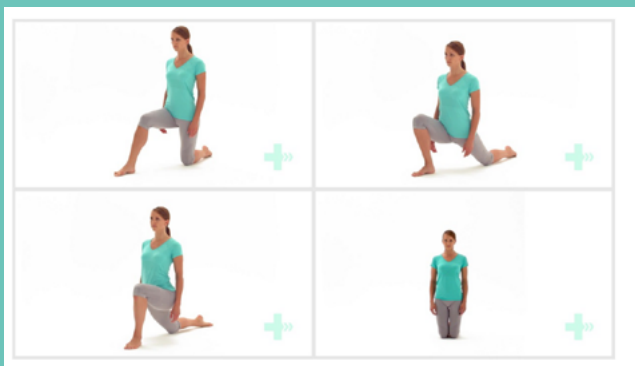
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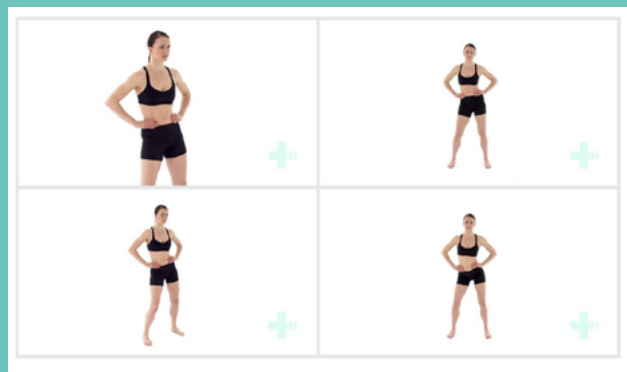
## Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch

Kneel on the floor and place the unaffected foot in a large stride in front of you. Push the hips forwards evenly and keep your body straight until you feel the stretch in the front of the hip on your back leg. Hold this position.



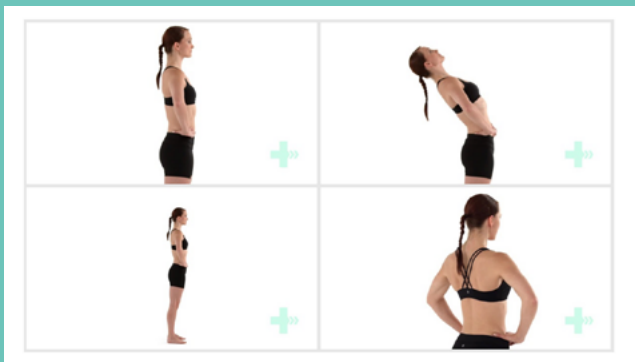
## Standing Pelvic Circles

Stand up straight with your feet hips width apart. Soften your knees a little. Place your hands on your hips. Begin making small circles with your pelvis. Push your hips out to one side, tuck your tail bone under as you bring your hips to the front. Push your hips out to the other side. Finally push your hips back behind you, sticking your tail bone out. Continue this in one fluid movement, keeping your upper body and head still. Gradually increase the size of the circles if you can. Repeat in the opposite direction.



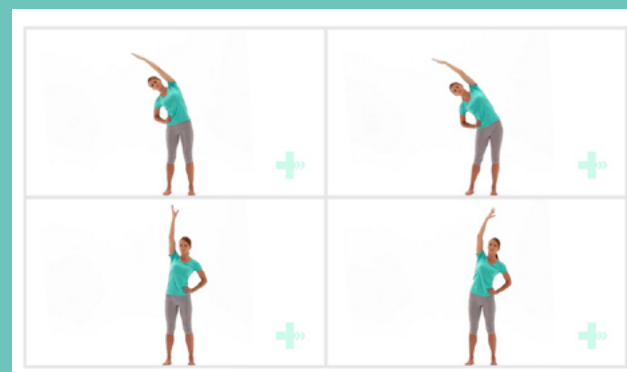
## Standing Trunk Extensions

Stand with your legs at hip width apart and straight. Place your hands on your hips. Lean your body backwards, trying to arch in the lower back as much as you can, lifting your chest up towards the ceiling. Try to avoid allowing your hips to swing forwards too far. Hold this position before returning to the start position.



## Lateral Trunk Stretch

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and place one hand on your hip. Extend the other hand into the air, leaning over to the side while you increase the stretch by pushing your hips in the opposite direction. Hold this position before you repeat on the other side.

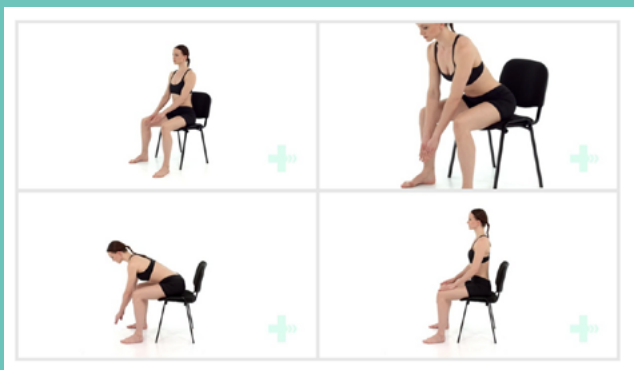




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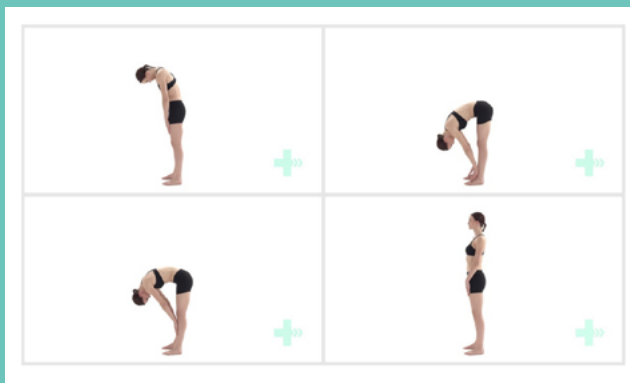
## Seated Hands to Toes

Sit up straight in a chair with your hands on your knees.  
Ensure your feet and legs are apart, creating a space for you to lean down between.  
Slowly bend forward over your thighs, reaching your hands down towards the floor.  
Hold this position, and then slowly return to the upright position, using your hands to assist you if needed.



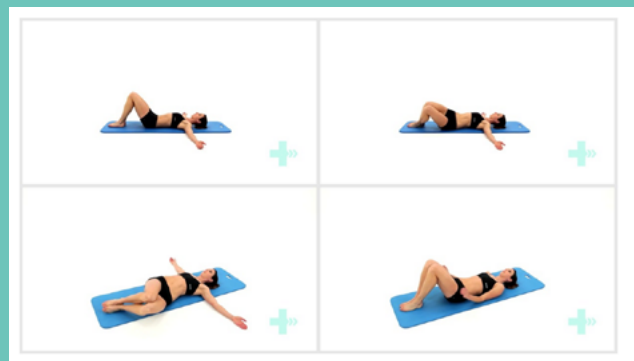
## Standing Trunk Flexion

Stand with your legs hip width apart and straight.  
Slowly slide your hands down the front of your thighs towards your feet.  
Only go as far as you can manage comfortably whilst keeping your legs straight.  
Hold this position, and then slowly return to the start position.



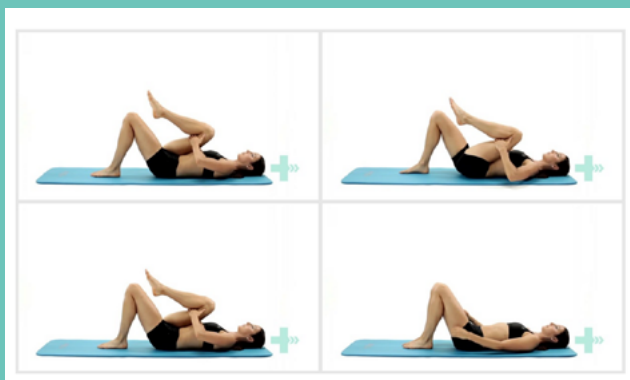
## Lower Back Rotations

Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.  
Extend your arms out to the sides and keep your shoulders on the mat at all times.  
Keeping your knees together, drop them down to one side, rotating your torso.  
Return to the starting position and allow your knees to fall to the opposite side.  
Only drop your knees as far as you go comfortably.  
You may want to hold the stretch on each side.



## Knee to Chest

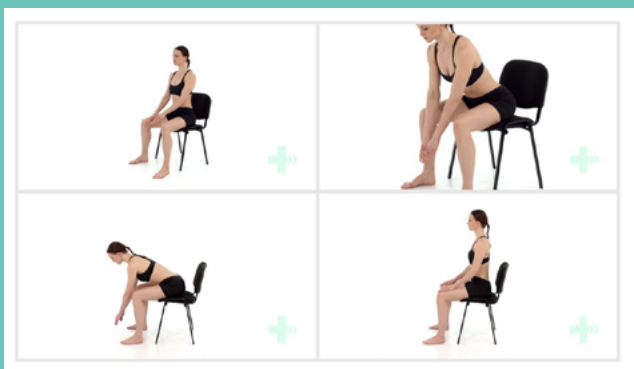
Bend your knees so that the feet are flat on the floor.  
Reach underneath your knee and pull the knee in towards your chest as far as you can go comfortably.  
Ensure you grab behind the thigh and not on top of the knee to avoid compressing the knee joint.  
Hold this position.



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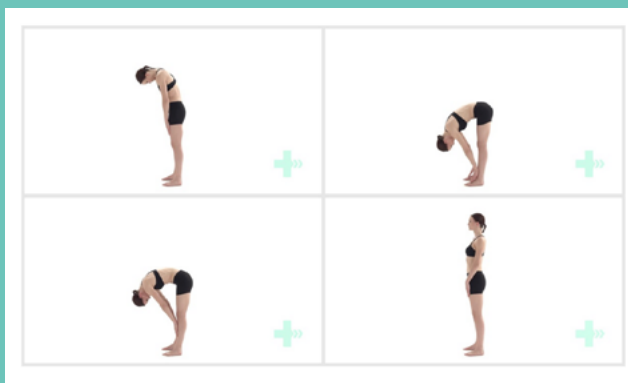
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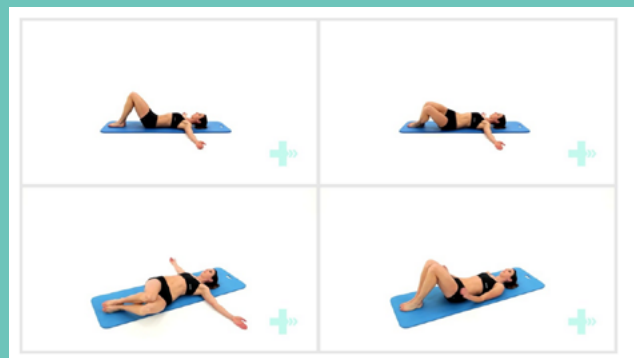
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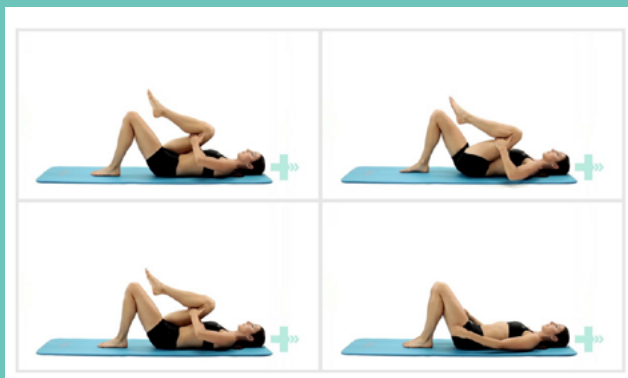
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Return to the starting position and allow your knees to fall to the opposite side.  
Only drop your knees as far as you go comfortably.  
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## Knee to Chest

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Ensure you grab behind the thigh and not on top of the knee to avoid compressing the knee joint.  
Hold this position.

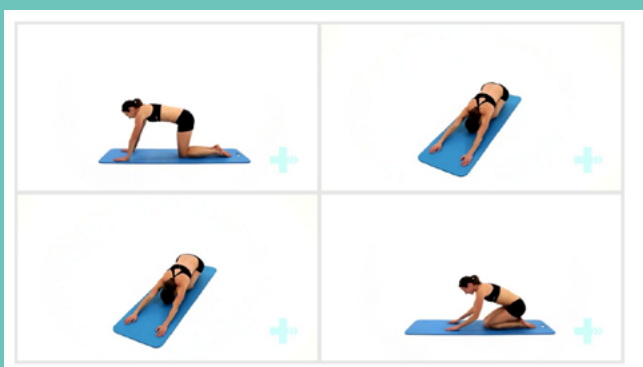


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## Child's Pose

Get onto your hands and knees, and drop your buttocks back onto your heels. Stretch your hands forwards, dropping your head between your shoulders towards the floor.

You will feel this stretch through your back and upper arms.



## Thread the Needle

Start on your hands and knees, with your hands under your shoulders and knees under your hips.

Take one hand off the floor and reach in and through between your other arm and your legs.

Allow your body and head to follow, moving your shoulder down towards the floor as your hand reaches through.

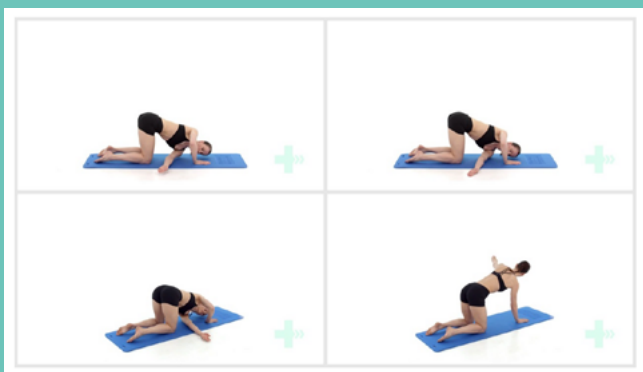
You should feel a stretch down your side, your shoulder blade and neck.

Hold this position, and then return to the starting position.

Reach your arm out to the other side, and then up towards the ceiling.

Follow the movement of your hand with your head, twisting in the other direction to look up towards the ceiling.

Hold this position, and then repeat the sequence.



## What else might help?

### Heat Pack

A heat pack is often used to increase blood flow to an area and help reduce pain and tension.

### Massage Cream / Heat cream

If you don't have a microwave or the energy to warm a heat pack up, gentle self massage of the muscles using a heat cream can help.

### Magnesium Spray

Magnesium is commonly used in a musculoskeletal setting to help reduce muscular tension and secondary pain.

### Epsom Salts

Much like magnesium, Epsom salts can help calm sore and tight muscles. You can use these in a bath or simply in a foot soak.

### Foam Roller

Foam rollers don't take up too much room, and are quite inexpensive for the amount of benefit they can have! Foam rollers can be used to help stretch and mobilise muscles and joints. Some examples are on the next page.

### Resistance Band

On the next page, there are some exercises that require resistance bands and can be very helpful for lower back pain and postural issues.

### Exercise Ball

If you have the space in your isolation room, an inflatable exercise ball can be used to both stretch and strengthen different muscle groups. Some examples are shown on the next page.

### Massage Ball / Pocket Physio

These self-massage tools are very helpful when you are stuck in isolation alone. There are many ways to use them, some examples are to follow.



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## Pelvic Tilts on Exercise Ball

Sit on a stability ball with both feet firmly on the floor.  
Find your neutral sitting posture and hold this position.  
Rock your pelvis from side to side so that your hips lift up on each side in an alternating fashion.  
Make sure your feet stay flat on the floor throughout this exercise.



## Pelvic Neutral on Exercise Ball

Sit upright on a stability ball with your hands on your hips and your feet flat on the floor.

Begin by bending over and down into a slumped-over position with your body weight settled down through your tail bone.

Gradually roll yourself upwards from your tail bone until your weight is through your seat bones.

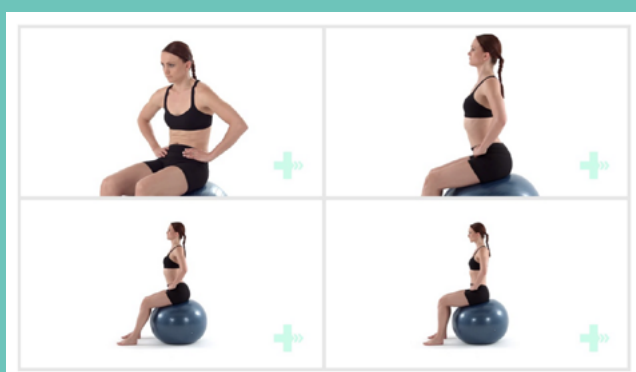
Lift your head up and look straight ahead.

Roll back down in to the slumped position again, keeping your weight settled down through your tail bone and then repeat the movement upwards, sitting as tall as you can through your seat bones.

From this position, roll slightly back until your weight is centrally through your pelvis and your lower back has a very slight arch to it.

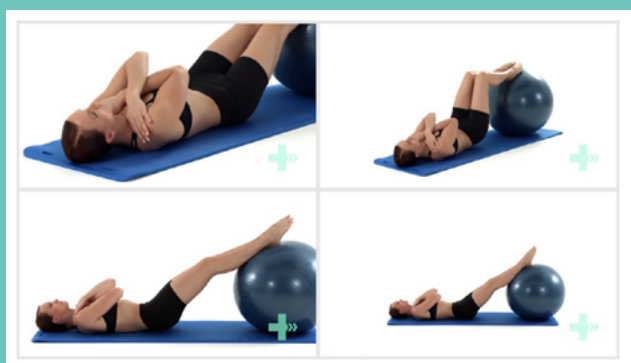
At the end of the movement your shoulders should be pulled back and down and your head upright looking straight ahead.

This is the pelvic neutral position.



## Exercise Ball Hamstring Curls

Start by lying on your back with your legs stretched out straight on a stability ball.  
Tilt your pelvis, so that your tail bone rolls off the floor.  
Hold this position and bend the knees in and out, rolling the ball with the movement.  
You will feel this movement through the back of your thighs.





## TIGHT CHEST & SHORTNESS OF BREATH

COVID-19 is a virus that affects the entire body. However, most people who have been diagnosed describe some sort of respiratory complaint such as a cough, shortness of breath, or chest tension. If you have been cleared by your doctor, there are some exercises that can help to make breathing a little easier. There are also some tools that can be very helpful for people with respiratory symptoms. These are discussed towards the end of this section.

## Goals of the respiratory exercises...

### Parasympathetic Nervous System

Often when people get short of breath, they also get anxious and engage the sympathetic nervous system/fight or flight response. By doing simple exercises, you can slow down your heart rate and respiratory rate and activate the Parasympathetic nervous system, allowing normal breathing to return.

### Thoracic mobility

By getting your mid-upper back moving, you are reducing the tension in the thoracic region, and allowing your ribs to expand more.

### Clearing the Airways

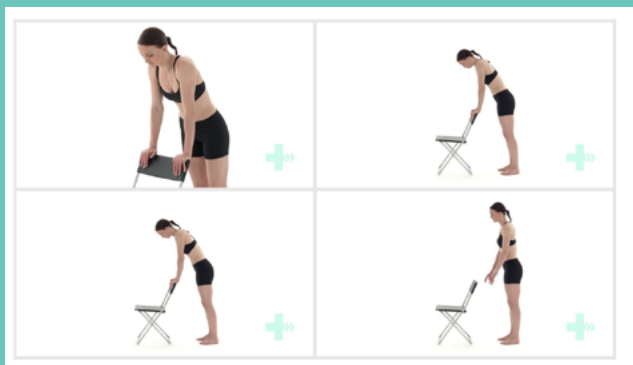
Some people with COVID experience phlegm production and a chesty cough. A series of breathing exercises detailed over the next few pages can help to expel some of this and in turn, clear your airways.

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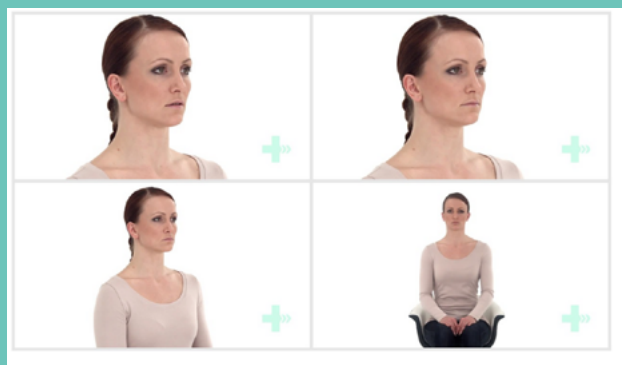
## Respiratory Ease Position

Stand up straight in front of a table or chair.  
Place both of your hands onto the surface.  
Lean onto the surface and let it take your weight.  
Relax your head between your arms.  
Slow your breathing in this position.



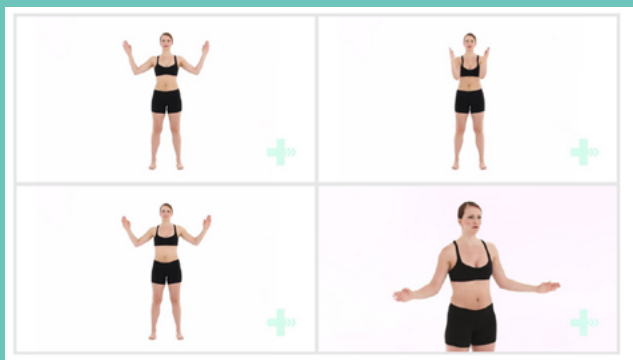
## Relaxing Breath

Start in a seated position with your back straight.  
Place the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth just behind your upper front teeth, and keep it there through the entire exercise.  
Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a count of four.  
Hold your breath for a count of seven.  
At the count of eight, exhale through your mouth, around your tongue, making a whoosh sound.  
This is one breath cycle.  
Inhale again and repeat as you feel a wave of relaxation moving through your body and the anxiety fading away.



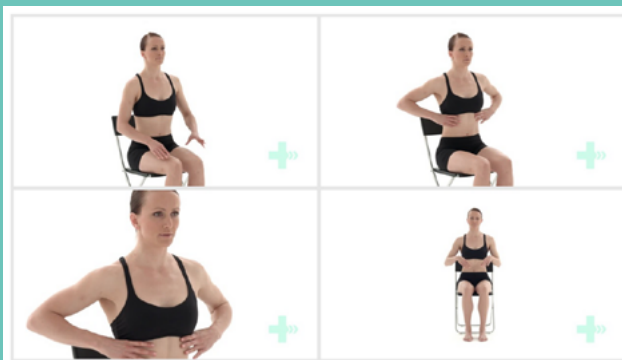
## Breathing Control

Stand up straight with your legs hips width apart.  
Lift your arms out to your sides and bend your elbows to 90 degrees.  
Your forearms and hands should point up to the ceiling.  
Ground yourself through your feet.  
Take a deep inhale in, allowing your abdomen to expand filling the air in the base of your lungs.  
As you exhale, bring your arms round in front of you to touch.  
Allow your upper back to round and your tummy muscles to tighten gently to assist the air out your lungs.  
Inhale, opening your arms again and breathing deeply into your abdomen.  
Continue this movement as a steady pace.



## Thoracic Expansion

Sit upright in a chair or sit upright on your bed with your legs supported.  
Relax your shoulders.  
Place your hands on your ribs.  
As you take a deep breath in through your nose, feel your ribs moving outwards as you fill your lungs.  
Breathe out through your mouth, letting the air flow out of your lungs.  
Do not force out the air.



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## Thoracic Expansion with Hold

Sit upright in a chair or sit upright on your bed with your legs supported.  
Relax your shoulders.  
Place your hands on your ribs.  
As you take a deep breath in through your nose, feel your ribs moving outwards as you fill your lungs.  
Hold this position.  
Breathe out through your mouth, letting the air flow out of your lungs.  
Do not force out the air.



## Active Cycle of Breathing Technique

Position your body comfortably as instructed by your physiotherapist.  
Relax your breathing by gently inhaling through your nose and out through your mouth, making sure your breaths are slow and controlled.  
Place your hands on the lower part of your ribs.  
Take three deep breaths in through your mouth filling your lungs, feeling your ribs gently move out as you breathe in.  
Return to your relaxed breathing technique.  
Place your hands on the lower part of your ribs.  
Take in three deep breaths in through your mouth.  
When you feel you have filled your chest with air, hold your breath for 3-5 seconds and then gently breathe out through your mouth.  
Go back to your relaxed breathing technique.  
Perform 3 huffs by taking in a deep breath through your nose and breathing out quickly with an open mouth, like a forced sigh.  
At the end of the cycle cough to clear any secretions.



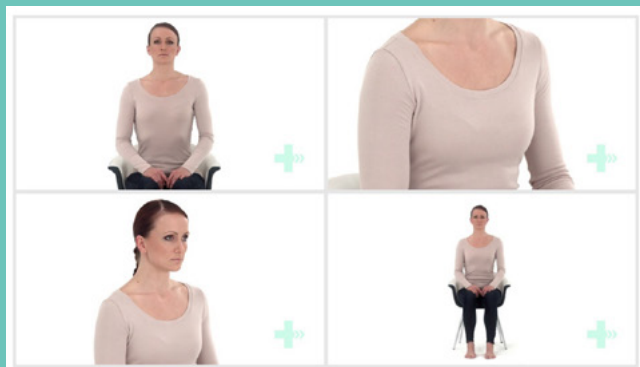
## Huff

Sit upright in a chair with your shoulders relaxed.  
Take a deep breath in through your nose, filling your lungs.  
Allow your abdomen to push out as you fill the bases of your lungs.  
Open your mouth and force the air out of your lungs.  
Use the strength from your stomach muscles to help push the air out.



## Deep Cough

Take a deep breath and hold it for 2 to 3 seconds.  
Use your stomach muscles to forcefully expel the air.  
Avoid a hacking cough, or merely clearing the throat.  
This exercise should be a deep cough, which is less tiring and more effective in clearing mucus out of the lungs.





## What else might help?

### Wedge Pillow

Wedge pillows are commonly used by people with breathing conditions. They help to open your airways and improve breathing quality when you sleep.

### Air Humidifier

Both cool air humidifiers and warm air humidifiers have a positive effect on respiratory conditions as our airways require moisture to function optimally

### Massage Gun

A massage gun is not just helpful for massage! Using the right head in the right position, a massage gun can actually be helpful in breaking up the mucus that may be in your lungs.

### PEP Flute

These simple devices work by adding resistance to your breath out. The pressure then builds up and forces your airways to remain open.

### A light walk +/- Fresh Air

If you are lucky enough to have access to your backyard, we recommend that you make the most of the times that you feel up to it and walk outside. You don't have to walk fast, or far. By walking, your airways will open and the phlegm/sputum in your lungs will have a more open passage to exit your body through.

### General Movement

Some people aren't lucky enough to have access to space to move or an outdoor area. While this isn't ideal, it is absolutely manageable. Try to incorporate the exercises in this plan and also some whole-body movement as best as you can, with the space that you have.

### Fresh Air

Open your window and turn on any fans you have to keep the air circulating within your space. Think fresh air in, stale air out.

## How do I talk to my Physio if I am in Isolation?

### Telehealth Appointments

Over the last few years of the pandemic, Physiotherapists all over the world have been upskilling in telehealth. A telehealth appointment involves an appointment via telephone or video. Each clinic will have its own protocol for telehealth so it is always best to contact your usual clinic and discuss your options.

Within a telehealth appointment, your physiotherapist will perform a thorough assessment and diagnosis of your condition. Based on this, they will be able to create a custom management plan just for you! This may include exercise or advice, as well as a deep understanding of your condition and what else you can do to help it.

Regardless of the condition, the sooner you understand the diagnosis and commence treatment with a physiotherapist, the sooner you will be on top of your symptoms.





## Looking after your Mental Health

Even if your physical symptoms of COVID aren't terrible, there remains a good chance that you may feel some effect on your mental health. As human beings, we require community and communication. Additionally, while in lockdown you may have limited income, support, access to food, and also fear of the unknown. We have some tips here to help you reduce the impact of isolation on your mental health.

## What might help?

### Routine

What does help to pass the days while you are in isolation due to COVID-19, is to remain in a routine as best as possible. Obviously, different people will experience symptoms to varying degrees. If you are one of the fortunate many who have only mild symptoms, try to follow a routine as best as you can and maintain some regularity with your sleep/wake and eating cycle.

### Eat Healthy Foods

When we feel unwell, it pays to eat a variety of fresh, nutritious foods in order to give our immune system a fighting chance. But food doesn't just help our immunity. The types of food you eat plays a huge role in your mood, quality of sleep and energy levels. All of these factors are crucial for good health. If you are unsure or have questions, dietitians are also offering telehealth appointments and are in a fantastic position to help you!

### Guilt-Free Binge

Today's world is one of constant stimulation and often stress! This week 'stuck' at home could be rebranded into an opportunity to catch up on the TV show or movie that you have wanted to watch for so long, but never had the chance to. We are often praised for our productivity and are made to feel guilty when we aren't working towards something bigger, so here is your permission (from a health professional if that helps!) to watch that TV show guilt free and ENJOY it.

### Mental Stimulation

While fatigue might be holding your body back physically, a lot of people with COVID remain mentally active. Boredom is common in situations like isolation, so having access to some stimulating podcasts, games, artwork, books, etc may be useful to listen to/read/do while isolated. They are a fantastic way to change up the mundaneness of TV.

## What else might help?

### Video Chats

The technology of today has made the world so small! This isn't ideal when it comes to the spread of pandemics, but it does come in handy when we are stuck isolating! If you have a phone, iPad, or computer with video capacity, it is very likely that you will be able to make video calls to your loved ones. A video call is an immersive experience that allows you to feel as if you are truly there. You can stay connected and not feel like you are missing out on too much while you are stuck at home alone.

### Social Media Apps

We are quick to give warnings to people about social media, but if used with caution, social media can provide you with closeness and contact to people and things around the world without having to move anything more than a finger! When in isolation, embrace the power of social media. You can use it to reconnect with friends that you haven't spoken to in a while or search for holiday destinations for when things blow over.

### Meal Delivery Companies

You may lack the fridge space to store one week's worth of food in your house, and you may not have healthy friends/family who can deliver you fresh food as required. Enter: Meal Delivery Companies. While you may be able to make it cheaper, you probably don't have the energy! And if you do, there is a fair chance that the supermarkets have sold out of the ingredients you need. Meal delivery companies can provide you with some healthy, balanced meals, directly to your door. You may pay slightly more than it cooking for yourself, but the value is in the convenience!

### A light walk +/- Fresh Air

We have already discussed the effect of this on your lungs, but it also affects your mind! Gently moving your body as able can help to increase energy levels and general mood. Bonus effects come if you are able to move your body outdoors. Vitamin D helps with many of our body's natural processes and helps stave off mood disorders. There is also some evidence to suggest that 'green power' that is harnessed by being outdoors and in greenery can help with short-term mood improvements. Can't get outside? Bring the outdoors to you! Take an indoor plant into isolation with you and feel the difference.

### Avoid Alcohol

Many people are guilty of turning to alcohol when bored. Others use it as a coping mechanism when they start to feel down. We suggest that you avoid alcohol as much as possible when in isolation. It is hard enough to keep your mood up when in isolation, but alcohol is also a depressant. Not to mention, Alcohol can have a negative impact on your sleep quality and immune function. This means that you could very well extend the length of your illness and increase the severity of your symptoms simply by drinking alcohol.

### Sleep Hygiene

When we spend all of our time in one place, awake or asleep, it is easy for our brain to dissociate our beds from the routine of sleep. Good sleep hygiene practice will help your brain acknowledge when it is time to sleep vs time to be awake.

# WE ARE OPEN

*and we are here to help*

If you or someone you love is in isolation and requires help from our clinical team, please don't hesitate to contact us on the details below. We will be able to arrange a telehealth appointment if required and ensure that you/your loved one is equipped with the knowledge and tools to get through isolation as healthily as possible.

All products recommended in this booklet are able to be found via your local physiotherapist. Contactless delivery/pick-up can be arranged. Please contact us to discuss your options with one of our helpful reception staff.

Yours in health,

*The team at*



Peninsula  
Hand Therapy  
Hand and Upper Limb Rehabilitation