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Message from Rachel Power

This has proved to be an extremely difficult week for our country and many others. It is clear that we are now facing a sustained public health crisis, on a scale not seen in living memory.

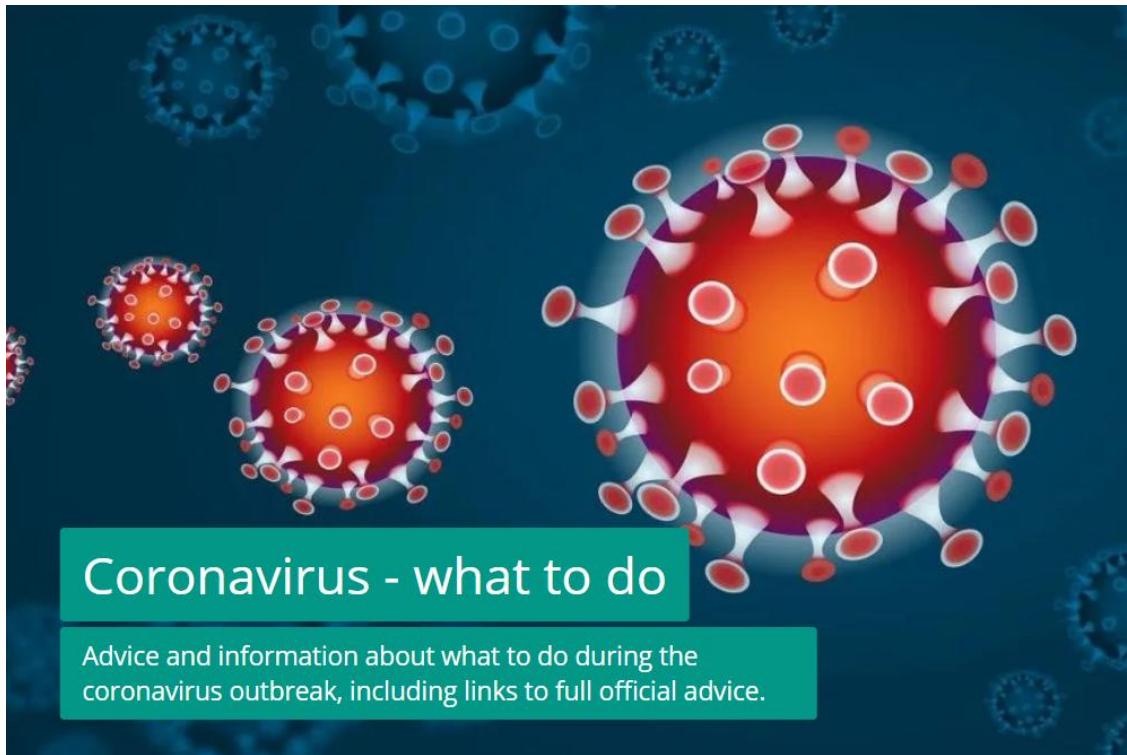
The Patients Association remains open for business during the coronavirus outbreak. We are posting information for patients on our website and social media channels as it becomes available, and our helpline will be open at its usual times. If additional opening hours for the helpline are required, we will endeavour to provide them.

Support groups are springing up locally all over the country to help those who need support to self-isolate. Our helpline is monitoring these and will direct callers to groups in their area when possible.

I urge you to follow official advice about social distancing and self-isolation, which is summarised below and also provided on our website. There is every reason to expect the severity of the coronavirus outbreak to worsen, and there is a duty on all of us to act responsibly and not contribute to spreading the illness.

Please stay safe. I wish you all the best, and thank you for your ongoing support for the Patients Association.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel".



The main common symptoms of coronavirus are:

- a **high temperature**
- a new, **continuous cough**.

If you have either of these symptoms you should **stay at home for seven days**.

If you live with anyone who has these symptoms, you should stay at home for 14 days. If you develop symptoms during this period, however mild, you should not leave home for seven days after the symptoms started, or the end of the 14 day period, whichever is later.

In the first instance, seek advice and information online. **Do not visit your GP** or pharmacist. Call NHS 111 only if your condition gets worse, or does not get better after seven days.

If at all possible, **do not go out to buy food** or other supplies. Seek help from friends or family, and if you do see anyone, keep a distance from them (at least two metres / six feet).

Whether you feel unwell or not, the Government is advising everyone to **undertake 'social distancing'**. This means avoiding all unnecessary contact with others, including social engagements and going to your workplace unless absolutely necessary. See our [advice on looking after yourself](#) during self-isolation and social distancing.

Guidance on hand-washing and hygiene remains in place: **wash your hands more often**, with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use a hand sanitiser when you get home or into work, blow your nose,

sneeze, cough, eat, or handle food. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin and wash your hands. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home.

More detailed summaries, and links to full official guidance, are available via the link below.

[Coronavirus - essential advice](#)



Patients Association work during coronavirus

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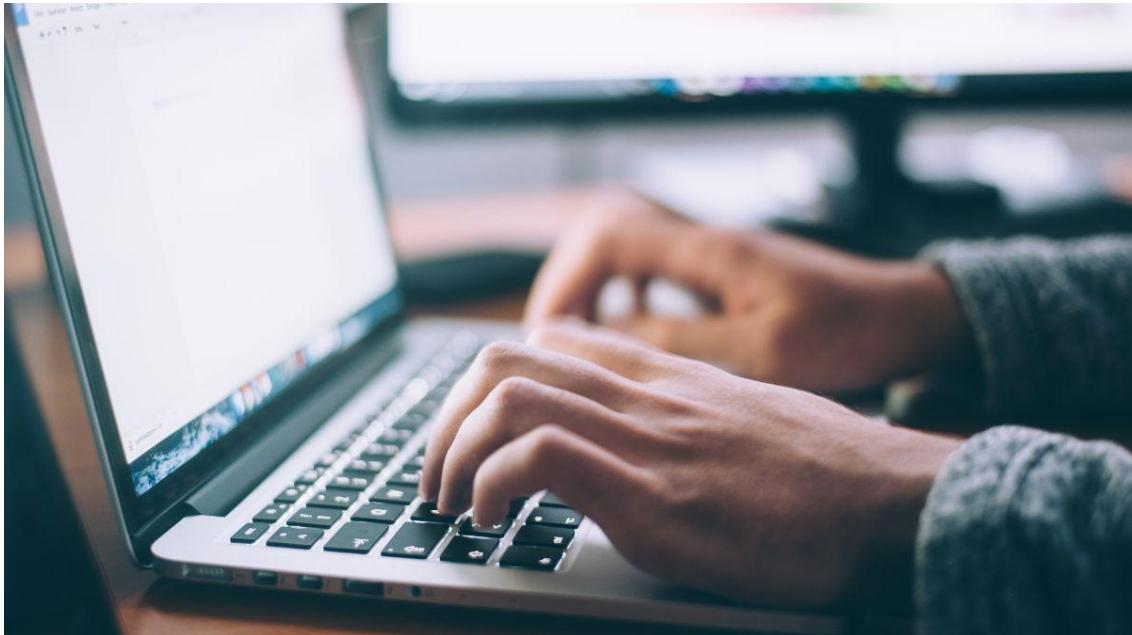
The Patients Association remains open during the period of 'social distancing' due to coronavirus.

Our helpline remains available to give free information, advice and signposting. You can call for free on 0800 345 7115 between 9:30am and 5pm on weekdays. You can also email helpline@patients-association.org.uk.

In line with official guidance, all our staff are working from home. Our usual contact numbers and email addresses remain in place, but we may not be able to access our post regularly while are in place. We therefore cannot guarantee that we will be able to respond to written correspondence sent to us by mail.

Our systems for remote working depend on strong internet connections, which are in place. However, please bear with us if there are any interruptions to calls or other communication problems due to momentary disruption to broadband or wi-fi connections. emergency measures

Finding accurate information online



Coronavirus is clearly having a big impact on many parts of daily life. But it's important not to be misled by inaccurate news stories and false information.

Unfortunately, these are circulating widely on the internet. Among many items of fake news are claims that coronavirus can survive on packaging for 28 days, was genetically engineered to spread efficiently among humans, caused by 5G, or can be detected by holding your breath. All of these stories are untrue.

We have today published our new information leaflet on finding trustworthy information about health issues online. It is available in full via the link below, and [this summary on our website](#) also includes links to sources of fact-checking and expert scientific comment.

[Read the leaflet](#)

Buying medicines online

The General Pharmaceutical Council has issued a new guide to buying medicines online. This was a planned piece of work, but is particularly timely given the likely disruption to healthcare services over the coming weeks.

The guide includes six top tips for anyone going online for medicines or treatment:

1. Check if the online healthcare service and healthcare professionals working there are registered with UK regulators.
2. Ask questions about how the service works
3. Answer questions honestly about your health and medical history
4. Find out your options for treatment and how to take any medicines you're prescribed
5. Expect to be asked for consent for information to be shared with other healthcare professionals involved in your care

6. Check what after-care you will receive.

The guide also gives details about what questions to ask when using online health services. It includes links to supporting information, such as how to check if an online service or health professional is regulated and what standards you can expect from health professionals providing remote consultations or prescribing online.

The advice within the guide was developed by leading health organisations using insights from concerns raised with them by patients and the public about online healthcare services, as well as direct feedback from patients and the public.

[Read the guide \[PDF\]](#)

From the helpline



Sam* was very concerned and upset about the service their partner had received. After many months they have convinced their partner to go to their GP about stress and depression, and the GP suggested the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme to them.

Getting an appointment with IAPT took a long time, but eventually Sam's partner went on a course. However, Sam felt it had made no difference, and that after all this time they were back to square one with no support.

We were able to talk Sam through a range of options. Returning to the GP and asking the IAPT service what else might be available were first among them. Additionally we highlighted that dedicated mental health charities such as MIND and Rethink have specialist helpline support, and that the Samaritans were available at any time to listen. Finally, we talked Sam through the complaints process, and how to share feedback with the CQC.

*name changed for privacy.

What our team is reading this week

Tens of thousands of retired medics asked to return to NHS

£1bn to speed up hospital discharge and free 15,000 beds

Coronavirus in London: Why is the outbreak worse in the capital?

Some hospitals may only treat coronavirus patients

Social care across the four countries of the UK: what can we learn?

About Us

Our vision is that health and social care will be delivered in a way that meets every person's health and social care needs.

Our mission is to give effect to the patient voice, to improve patient experience and support people to engage fully in their own care. Find out more about our values on our [website](#).

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