



Isolation Self Care Guide

With the rise of Covid-19, the government have announced strict, and potentially lengthy isolation measures. While this will shield our most vulnerable members of society from this devastating illness, isolation brings other detrimental effects to both physical and mental health. Physically, this will be particularly evident in older people as the lack of ability to 'exercise' (and that includes normal walking, carrying shopping bags, and working for those who have not yet retired) is likely to result in rapid weakening, loss of mobility and balance, as well as reduced cardiorespiratory function, and therefore increased risk of falls, increased likelihood of cardiorespiratory issues and ultimately reduced independence.

At Physiotherapy Matters we wanted to help combat some of this so have produced an Isolation Self Care Guide aimed specifically at those older persons who are being asked to go into isolation for potentially 4 months. The guide includes a number of handy tips for general wellbeing, as well as a daily exercise program you can use.

Self Care Tips

1. Avoid over-exposure to Covid-19 media coverage. Set boundaries as to how much news you watch, read or listen to as constant monitoring of updates, particularly from unregulated social media feeds, can lead to increased feelings of worry and anxiety. If you do feel you need extra information, access factual information on reputable sources, such as that on the NHS website.

2. Eat Well. Maintaining a healthy diet, full of vitamins, will provide your body with the nutrients you need to stay healthy, and give your brain energy to minimise exhaustion which can lead to increased symptoms of anxiety. The NHS 'eat well guide' is a great source of information for this.

3. Maintain regular routines. Keeping a routine such as waking at a set time in the morning, getting dressed and having meals at normal times, will help provide a sense of normality. Keeping up routine bedtimes will also help ensure good quality sleep and enough of it!

4. Stay in regular contact with a network of people. Particularly those who may be in the same boat as yourself. Calling each other regularly even just for a chat can help combat the feelings of loneliness. You could share tips such as these, share contacts of people that can help with anything in your area, even playing games or discussing craft/DIY/gardening projects over the telephone!

5. Get outside (safely). If you have a balcony or garden, getting some fresh air and a bit of sun will help your mental wellbeing as well as providing the vitamin D you need to keep bones strong and healthy. Maybe use this time to get your garden ready for summer?

6. Stay active. It's true what they say, if you don't use it, you lose it! It's then very hard to get that strength back, and with age, it gets harder! Not to mention exercise has been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Our specialist older people physiotherapists have designed a daily exercise program specifically for older people during this time of isolation. The program is designed to help you maintain mobility, strength, balance and respiratory function and is based on guidance by the UK Chief Medical Officer (Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019). Each day's workout should last approximately 20-30 minutes and involve a total of 5 exercises. For each exercise there are three options so that you can vary your workout daily, it may help to keep a diary! Experts have shown, however, that the detrimental *cardiovascular* effects of prolonged sitting cannot be outdone by a once/day exercise program, and so between workouts, pick one exercise to do every hour to minimize sedentary time.

Daily Exercise Program

Exercise 1: Cardio Warm up – 3minutes

Top tip! Find some upbeat music and do your cardio exercise in time to the song, and sing along!

Option 1: Marching/climb a rope. (Sitting if needed)



Option 2: Step climbing.

If you live in a bungalow but have a single step out to a garden or at the front door, use that to step on and off. If you struggle with your balance, be sure to be holding the bannister.



Option 3: Alternating opposite hand to knee.



Exercise 2: Lower body strength – 3 sets of 10 of each (more if you can!)

Option 1: Standing heel raises.

If this is too easy, try on one foot!



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Option 2: Sideways hip openings.

Make sure you stay stood up straight and don't be tempted to lean over to get more movement!



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Option 3: Sit to stand.

If you need to use your hands to start with, please do!



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Exercise 3: Upper body strength – 3 sets of 10 of each (more if you can!)

Option 1: Reach for the stars!

If this is too easy, try holding a tin of beans in each hand while you do the exercise!



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Option 2: Wall press up



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Option 3: Seated bicycle crunch.



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Exercise 4: Balance training – complete the exercise until you tire, then have a break and start again. (total of 3 minutes)

Top Tip! If you find all 4 of these are easy, try doing them with your eyes shut, just make sure you are next to something you can grab hold of if you feel you may fall!

Option 1: Walking with toes raised



Option 2: Heel to toe walking.



Option 3: One leg stand



Exercise 5: Cool down stretches – slow, gentle movement to the point of tightness, no further!

Option 1: Neck rotations x 10 each side



Option 2: Back bends x 10



Option 3: Shoulder Rolls

X 10 back then x 10 forwards

