
Coping with your inpatient stay during Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Being an inpatient can be a difficult time. This may be especially true during the Coronavirus pandemic. This information sheet has been put together to help you to prepare for and manage your inpatient stay at The Royal Marsden.

If you have questions about your specific situation or treatment, including precautions that are taken at The Royal Marsden to protect you from Coronavirus, please contact **The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline on 020 8915 6899**, or speak to your Clinical Nurse Specialist or ward nurse.

Preparing for your inpatient stay

Inpatient visits have been limited/ stopped to protect patients, their families and hospital staff from Coronavirus. The situation continues to change, and your clinical nurse specialist or ward staff will update you when there are changes relevant to you and your family/ friends.

At the current time it is particularly important to prepare for your inpatient stay. Write a list of everything you think you will need – it can be helpful to discuss this with other people to get their ideas. If you need to go into hospital at short notice, then someone else can arrange for your belongings to be dropped off at the hospital. You might want to consider the following:

- **Your current medications** in their original packets to show these to your medical team when you arrive.
- **Nightclothes, comfortable day clothes and slippers** (that cover your toes) to wear on the ward.
- **Toiletries and personal care items**, such as a shaving kit or electric razor, ear plugs and eye mask.
- **Things to keep you occupied**, such as

magazines/ books, audiobooks/ music/ podcasts, films/ TV (to watch on your device), crosswords, mindful colouring activities, computer games, a notebook.

- **Favourite drinks and snacks.** You are welcome to bring in your favourite drinks/ snacks, however, please check with your treatment team if there is anything you should avoid before or during your hospital stay. Please note there are no individual refrigerator or reheating facilities.
- **Contact with family/ friends.**
 - You might like to bring a phone/ tablet/ laptop and headphones to make phone/ video calls during your stay (remember your chargers).
 - Photos or mementoes of your family/ friends can help you to feel close to them.
 - There might be times you don't feel like speaking over the phone. Your family/ friends could record a video message for you to watch.
 - People can also write to you at:
 - Name (patient), Ward Name, The Royal Marsden, Fulham Road, SW3 6JJ
 - Name (patient), Ward Name, The Royal Marsden, Downs Road, Sutton, SM2 5PT
 - Sometimes it can feel overwhelming to repeatedly speak to people about your health; it may be helpful to nominate one or two people to act as a gatekeeper and keep other people informed on your behalf.
- **Pets.** If you have a pet(s) it will be important to arrange who will look after them and to write instructions for their care. It may also be important for you to find ways of being able to connect with your pet(s) via photos or video calls.



Coping during your inpatient stay

It's understandable that coming into hospital for cancer treatment can raise people's sense of anxiety, stress, agitation or sadness. Coronavirus may increase your worries about infection control at the hospital, or concerns about your family/ friends and how they may cope without you at home. You may be surprised by how you feel and whatever you feel is ok.

- **Stay connected with family and friends.**
- **Activities to support your emotional wellbeing**
 - Radio Marsden broadcasts 24/7 and you can listen on your bedside TV on Radio 700 or via <http://www.radiomarsden.co.uk/>. People can send in requests to be played on air by emailing studio@radiomarsden.co.uk or by visiting the website.
 - Keep yourself entertained whilst on the ward with activities such as audiobooks/ music/ podcasts, films/ TV, crosswords, mindful colouring activities, computer games.
 - You might find journaling or drawing a helpful way to process your thoughts and emotions during your stay, especially if you don't want to talk to others.
 - Mindfulness exercises can help you to let go of worries and focus on the present moment. To practice the 3 Minute Mindful Breathing Space [click here](#). If you would like to practise more mindfulness exercises, you can search on the internet for organisations such as Headspace or Calm.
 - If you feel you need additional support for your emotional wellbeing whilst you are an inpatient, please speak with ward staff. You can access pastoral care, relaxation exercises, complimentary therapies, and psychological therapy or medication to help with your mood.

Being discharged into self-isolation

- Some people are relieved to be discharged from hospital to their own home. Others find going home can be difficult and can cause anxiety, especially if they have been in hospital for some time.
- When you are discharged from your inpatient stay you may need to have a period of shielding, or self-isolation, to protect yourself from Coronavirus. Please speak with your medical team for specific information on what you should do once you leave hospital.
- Shielding/ self-isolation at home is likely to cause disruption to your usual routine and your ability to seek care and comfort when you need it the most. Please do continue to reach out to friends and family for support, following the government guidelines.
- It's important to follow the guidance given to you by your treatment team and not to push yourself too hard. However, establishing a home routine can help you to gain a sense of control and improve your emotional wellbeing. Once you are well enough, think about a basic routine, such as setting an alarm to wake up at the same time each morning, getting dressed into your 'day clothes' and eating regular meals. Once you are ready, try to have a balance of activities in each day that give you a sense of Achievement, Connection and Enjoyment (ACE). These can include any activities that are meaningful to you and are manageable given your current health and energy levels.

Additional resources

For further information and support you may wish to read our other information sheets on The Royal Marsden website, or to visit:

<http://www.copingwithcoronavirus.co.uk>

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/get-help>

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This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

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