

A guide to managing your sexual health and mental well-being during coronavirus (COVID-19)



Hi Everyone,

During this unexpected period of **social distancing and self-isolation**, we thought it would be a good idea to provide you with a short, useful guide with a few handy tips and tools from us at the **Decolonising Contraception (DC) Collective** to **positively manage** your sexual health and mental well-being.

The COVID-19 situation is daunting and **it's normal** to feel *anxious, scared or even overwhelmed* with everything that's going on. Whilst it is important to stay informed, you can reduce some of the stress you might be feeling by limiting your intake of news and fear-inducing videos or podcasts.

Looking after our mind and body during this pandemic is vital, so try your best to eat the right foods, get enough sleep, have healthier conversations with friends and family and of course practice good hygiene to minimise transmission and acquisition of the virus as much as possible.

We hope that during this down time, you are able to **refocus your energy** towards some of the things that you haven't had the time to do lately. Whether that's reading or meditating, cooking or gardening, listening to that podcast, watching that film or series on Netflix or maybe even catching up on some well needed sleep.

Whilst you spend more time at home, it might also be helpful to break up your day, so you don't get too overwhelmed by being in one space for too long. Maybe make a brief schedule for the week that includes adequate breaks throughout the day that allows you to utilise different rooms in the house - if possible - or even to take a walk outside around the block or to a local park.

There are a variety of ways to spend your time healthier over the next couple of weeks and we hope that you feel **more energised and relaxed** as a result.

"You never know which experiences of life are going to be of value . . . You've got to leave yourself open to the hidden opportunities."

– Robin Roberts

In solidarity

The Decolonising Contraceptive (DC) Collective

Contents Page

- What is coronavirus?**
- What is self-isolation?**
- What is social distancing?**
 - Busting myths**
 - Can I have sex?**
 - STIs**
 - HIV, PEP and PrEP**
 - Contraception**
 - Abortion care**
 - Periods**
 - Endometriosis**
 - Pregnancy care**
 - Menopause**
- Domestic abuse survivors**
- Mental health**
- Recommended links**

What is Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

COVID-19 is a disease that impacts your lungs and airways. It's caused by a new virus called coronavirus.

What are the symptoms?

- Coughing - a lot for more than an hour/ over 2 episodes of coughing in 24 hours.
- A high temperature - your chest or back feels hot to the touch
- Feeling hot and cold intermittently
- Shortness of breath

It is important to note that some people may have the virus but not show symptoms for approximately 2-10 days, which is why social distancing is important.

How does the virus spread?

COVID-19 spreads via saliva from the mouth or droplets and mucus from the nose of an infected person. When someone coughs or sneezes, they send tiny droplets from their nose or mouth into the air.

These droplets could contain COVID-19 and if you are too close, you may breathe in the droplets and therefore the infection. Try to put 1 metre between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

What can I do to minimise getting it?

Washing your hands frequently with soap and water for **20 seconds** (*singing the happy birthday song twice*) can help stop the virus spreading. This works because the washing kills the virus that may be on your hands. Our hands are the part of the body which touch objects and people the most. If your hands pick up COVID-19 and then you touch your eyes, mouth or nose, the virus can enter your body and make you ill.

If you sneeze or cough, it is important to limit its reach by using a tissue to catch it. If you sneeze or cough into your hands, make sure you wash them immediately after.

What can I do to minimise passing it on if I have COVID-19?

If you have the symptoms listed above, you will need to self-isolate for 7 days. There is currently no specific treatment for coronavirus and unfortunately, antibiotics do not help. Current treatment aims to relieve the symptoms while your body fights the illness.

What is Self-isolation?

Firstly, it is important to remember that not all COVID-19 cases are fatal. But due to the rapid spread of the virus, it is likely that you have previously contracted the virus and your body's immune system has successfully fought it off, or you have recently been in contact with someone who has the virus.

Don't panic! If you have been in contact with someone who has the virus or you are currently presenting symptoms, you will need to immediately self-isolate for 7 days to stop the virus from spreading.

After 7 days:

- if you do not have a high temperature, you do not need to self-isolate
- if you still have a high temperature, keep self-isolating until your temperature returns to normal
- You do not need to self-isolate if you just have a cough after 7 days. A cough can last for several weeks after the infection has gone.

Self-isolation means:

- Not going out in public areas
- Not using public transport or taxis
- Not having visitors in your home
- Not going out to get food or medication. *You can order these online or use a mutual aid group (explained below) for assistance. People can leave food and medication on your doorstep.*

If you live with someone who has symptoms, stay at home for 2 weeks starting from when the first person showed symptoms. Try to keep away from each other by being in different rooms.

Do not share towels and wipe down surfaces after use with soap and water.

If more than 1 person at home has symptoms, self-isolate for 14 days from the day the first person started having symptoms.

If you get symptoms, self-isolate for 7 days from when your symptoms start, even if it means you're self-isolating for longer than 14 days.

If you do not get symptoms, you can stop self-isolating after 14 days.

If you live with someone who is

- 70 or over,
- has a long-term health condition,
- is pregnant
- or has a weakened immune system

If you have to stay at home together, try to keep away from each other as much as possible. If you're not sure if you need to self-isolate use the 111 coronavirus service to find out what to do.

In light of the new rules announced by the Government to stop the spread of COVID-19, you should only leave home to:

- shop for groceries, medicine, and other essentials (infrequently)
- exercise outside (once a day)
- provide care or help a vulnerable person
- do essential work that cannot be done from home
- attend to any medical need

Do I need to self-isolate if I have HIV?

1. People with CD4 >200 and undetectable on ART are considered at no greater risk than the general population; follow general advice.
2. People with CD4 <200, detectable viral load or not on ART may be at higher risk of severe illness; follow general advice.
3. People with a CD4 count <50 or opportunistic illness in the last 6 months; follow shielding advice for the extremely vulnerable.

In summary if your viral load is undetectable and your CD4 count is greater than 200 then there is no need for you to take any additional precautions compared to those of a negative HIV status. Please see [British HIV Association](#) for further details.

What is social distancing?

Social distancing is a method currently being used by the governments and Public Health England to reduce social interaction between people. The coronavirus is highly transmissible via persons to person contact therefore, reducing the contact you have with people can help to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

This includes:

- Avoiding contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). (*These symptoms include high temperature and / or new and continuous cough*)
- Avoiding non-essential outings in public
- Working from home, where possible. (*Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to employer guidance for more information*)
- Avoiding gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media
- Using telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services

Everyone should be trying to follow these measures as much as is practicable. It is strongly advised to significantly limit face-to-face interaction with friends and family, particularly if you:

- are over 70
- are pregnant
- Have had an organ transplant
- Are having certain cancer treatments (*ask your specific healthcare specialist*)
- Have diabetes
- Have blood or bone marrow cancer
- Have a severe lung condition e.g. cystic fibrosis or severe asthma
- Have heart disease
- Are on medication that weakens the immune system.
- Have an illness that makes you susceptible to infections.

This advice is likely to be in place for some weeks.

For full government guidance <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

How can I help my community?

Covid mutual aid groups aim to provide essential care (for example food and medication left on the doorstep) for people who are self-isolating.

Mutual aid groups also offer support to those people who are feeling anxious throughout the pandemic. This is done through video chat, phone calls and online games.

Here's a link to access Local Groups in your area - <https://covidmutualaid.org/local-group>

Busting some myths

We wanted to correct some myths that have been circulating about the new coronavirus to limit any time, energy and money spent because of them.

- Antibiotics do not help with COVID-19 cases as they do not work against viruses.
- Although drinking water is very good for you, drinking water every 15 minutes will not prevent the virus from residing in the body and may upset your body's balance.
- Drinking alcohol will not kill any virus which has entered the body.
- Cold weather cannot kill the new coronavirus as the human body will remain around 36.5-37°C, regardless of what the outside temperature is.
- A hot bath will not destroy the new coronavirus.

- There is no evidence that eating garlic can prevent COVID-19.
- Drinking cow urine will not prevent COVID-19.
- There is no evidence that Black or people of colour are more immune to the virus. Dr Annabel Sowemimo has written about this in more detail on gal-dem.com

Taking care of your sexual health

It is important to look after your sexual health at this time as it impacts your mental and physical health more generally. If you are feeling unwell and want to get advice from your GP or sexual health clinic, please call them first and **do not** go into your local surgery. You will be given a phone appointment and then if they feel it is necessary, they may give you an in-person appointment.

Can I have sex?

- You are your safest sexual partner. Touching yourself will not spread COVID-19, given that you are washing your hands and sex toys with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after sexual activity.
- Your next safest partner will be someone who lives with you. At this time, you should avoid sex with anyone outside of your home.
- If you are having any physical contact including hugging, kissing and other sexual touching, make sure your partners are symptom free. Wash your hands before and after any sexual contact.
- Do not have physical contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of COVID-19. You should physically distance from them for 14 days.
- Video dates, video sex and sexting may be better options at this time. See the following link for tips on sex during a pandemic - <https://thecrankyqueer.substack.com/p/how-to-have-sex-in-the-covid-19-coronavirus>.
- Rimming (mouth on anus) can spread COVID-19 as the virus has been found in the faeces of infected people. Through rimming, the virus can enter your mouth. Use condoms and dental dams as a barrier during oral, anal and vaginal sex.
- Wipe down keyboards and touch screens regularly.

Selling sex

SWARM (Sex Workers and Advocacy Collective Movement) is a sex worker led collective based in the UK, who define sex workers as people who sell their own sexual labour or performance, or who have done so in the past.

Due to the rapid spread of COVID-19, everyone has been advised to stay at home, to stop face-to-face socialising and to stop all non-essential journeys. Therefore, selling sex at this moment in time is not advisable, nor is it safe.

This advice protects both sex workers, clients and also the most vulnerable in our society to remain safe and well.

SWARM has set up a hardship fund for SWs during COVID 19.

They are offering a one-off payment of £200 to sex workers who are in financial crisis, individuals need to fill in an online assessment form via the following link:

<https://www.swarmcollective.org/blog/2020/3/14/help-us-build-a-hardship-fund-for-sex-workers-in-crisis>

How can I get condoms?

You can get condoms from local pharmacies and online from places such a [Superdrug](#).

Depending on where you live, you can order free condoms online that are delivered to you from Metro Sexual Health - <https://getit.org.uk/>

How can I get tested for sexually transmitted infections?

If you do not have any symptoms, you may be able to order a home STI testing kit from the following places, but your local sexual health clinic may also provide their own postal service:

- Sexual Health London - <https://www.shl.uk/> (FREE)
- SH:24 - <https://sh24.org.uk/> (FREE)
- Fettle - <https://fettle.health/> (affordably priced)

You will receive the testing kit in the post with instructions. Once you have followed the instructions, you can post the kit back to the stated address using your nearest post box.

It is important that you test yourself if you have had **unprotected sexual contact** and do not know the STI status of your sexual partners. Some people will be **asymptomatic** which means they may not have any symptoms even though they have contracted an STI.

If you are presenting with symptoms, call your GP or STI clinic first before going in. Symptoms include but are not limited to:

- Itchy genitals
- Pain during urination
- Redness
- Pain during sex
- Lumps or sores

Preventing HIV Risk

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a virus that can be caught through unprotected sex. If a person has been infected by HIV, they may increase flu like symptoms, joint pain or tiredness. However, more often than not, those who contract HIV may not experience any symptoms altogether. Consistent and correct condom use, and regular HIV testing are some

of the tools that can be used to prevent HIV transmission. However, due to the current COVID-19 situation, clinic access may be limited nationwide.

With this in mind here are two other forms of prevention that can be used to reduce HIV transmission and acquisition.

Accessing PEP

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is a course of medication that is taken 72 hours (3 days) after HIV risk has occurred. PEP can be accessed via Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments across the country or at a local sexual health clinic. If there has been a HIV risk, it is important that PEP is taken as soon as possible to avoid HIV acquisition. The treatment must be taken every day for 28 days (4 weeks).

PEP can cause side effects in some people, such as:

- tiredness
- diarrhoea
- nausea
- vomiting
- feeling generally unwell

But these side effects usually subside after a while.

Prior to taking PEP, you will be given a HIV test to ensure you are not HIV positive and then if you decide to take PEP based on your circumstances, another HIV test will be taken at the end of your treatment in 28 days.

Accessing PrEP

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a pill taken before sex to prevent HIV transmission. PrEP only protects against HIV, therefore, to prevent all other infections, condoms and regular STI testing is advised. Currently PrEP is being accessed through [The PrEP IMPACT](#) trial at sexual health clinics across the country for those who are deemed to be at risk of acquiring HIV. However, [PrEP will be made routinely available across England, to everyone who needs it as part of the government's aim to end HIV transmission by 2030.](#)

Other factors related to a higher risk of HIV included, but are not limited to:

- A recent STI (*especially rectal infection such as syphilis, Hepatitis C or Lymphogranuloma venerum*)
- Use of PEP (*post exposure prophylaxis*)
- Using some recreational drugs (*crystal methamphetamine, mephedrone or GHB/GBL*)
- also known as chemsex

When taken daily, PrEP is highly effective at preventing HIV transmission from sex or injection drug use. Studies have shown that PrEP reduces the risk of getting HIV from sex by about 99% when taken daily.

Iwantprepnow is a helpful online service that provides more information about PrEP across the UK in addition to providing information on online retailers and prices of PrEP, particularly if you are unable to access PrEP at a clinic during these critical times. PrEP starts at £19 per month and a secure postal address is needed for the medication to be delivered to.

Being on PrEP means you don't have to worry about the status of your partner(s), because you're protecting yourself.

Living with HIV and accessing PrEP

It is expected that several people on PrEP may choose to stop it or switch to an event-based regime during this time as they may not be having sex as part of social distancing. Our friends at Prepster have put together a great resource for people living with HIV as well as those who will need access to PrEP - <https://prepster.info/covid/>

Taking Care of Your Reproductive Health

Managing your reproductive health is important so that you are not in any unnecessary pain and to ensure that this part of your health is not ignored. Your reproductive health may include getting suitable contraception, managing your menstrual cycle and menopause symptoms.

Contraception

For more details on contraceptive methods then please read [our contraceptive guide](#).

Where can I get contraception?

- During this period of social isolation, the provision of the most effective methods of contraception - long acting reversible contraception including implants, injectable progesterone and intrauterine devices. The [Faculty of Sexual & Reproductive Health](#) have advised that:
 - Extended use of Nexplanon for 4 years
 - Extended use of banded copper IUDs for 12 years
 - Extended use of 52mg LNG-IUS (Mirena/Levosert) for 6 years could be discussed with arrangements made for removal/replacement after the COVID-19 crisis is over.
 - Users of copper IUDs licensed for 5 years, Jaydess and Kyleena should be advised to use condoms or add desogestrel POP at end of the license duration of use. Women can leave the LARC in place and add a POP on top if they are worried, but the risk of pregnancy is likely to be small.
- Your GP or Sexual Health should be able to provide a prescription for either the progesterone only or combined hormonal
- <https://sh24.org.uk/> - SH:24 is an online sexual health service which can send out **FREE contraception, emergency contraception and STI testing kits** to your home. Your order will arrive in discreet packaging with clear instructions.
- <https://onlinedoctor.superdrug.com/> and <https://onlinedoctor.lloydspharmacy.com/> Superdrug and Lloyds Pharmacy have online doctor services where you can **buy contraception, emergency contraception and STI treatment medication** prescribed and delivered to your door. You will need to fill in a short consultation questionnaire which will assess what medication you will need.
- Emergency contraception including the copper intrauterine device should still be provided by your local sexual health clinic and oral methods at local pharmacies and GP practice.

What if I am pregnant and need a termination?

In England, Scotland and Wales, you can legally have an abortion at up to 23 weeks and 6 days of pregnancy. You do not need a GP referral to access NHS funded abortion care. See websites and numbers of abortion providers below. If you request a callback, a single attempt will be made to telephone you from a withheld number.

- <https://www.bpas.org/> - 0808 506 0904, phone lines open 7am-9pm
- <https://www.mariestopes.org.uk/> - 0345 300 8090, 24-hour booking and advice line

If you are over 18 weeks pregnant, call BPAS, Marie Stopes or your local NHS provider ASAP to prevent delays to your treatment. Due to low staffing from illness and isolation there have been abortion clinic closures.

We have been [campaigning for urgent changes](#) to abortion care provision to ensure there are no delays during the epidemic.

The government are now in the process of agreeing that [phone consultations for abortion](#) can take place.

The coronavirus outbreaks means there may be changes to how your abortion takes place including no surgical procedures using general anaesthetic (due to the risk of spreading corona virus during intubation) so, the same procedure may be offered whilst you are awake during local anaesthetic.

Medical abortions may be offered at home (which is often the case already in many centres).

Here you can access the [latest abortion guidance](#) produced by the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology & the Faculty of Sexual & Reproductive Health.

Periods

- You can call your GP if you have severe period pain or if your pattern of periods changes, (for example, if your periods become much heavier).
- The following things may help with [period pain](#):
 - Exercise - being active can reduce pain
 - Heat - putting a hot water bottle wrapped in a tea towel on the stomach
 - Warm bath
 - Light circular massaging around the stomach
 - Relaxation techniques such as yoga. E.G. [Yoga for menstrual cramps](#) with Rashmi Ramesh
 - Stopping smoking as smoking is thought to increase risk of period pain.

- It might be a good idea to start using reusable pads and reusable menstrual cups to save money at this time and to prevent running out of period wear. You can buy them online:

<https://www.honouryourflow.co.uk/>

<https://www.cheekywipes.com/organic-cotton-cloth-sanitary-pads.html>

<https://uk.lunette.com/collections/all>

<https://www.mooncup.co.uk/buy-the-mooncup/>

- [This video](#) is a good guide to pads, tampons and menstrual cups by the NHS.
- [Bloody Good Period](#) are both accepting donations and delivering menstrual products to those at risk of period poverty and some local aid groups are also providing this service.

Endometriosis

Endometriosis is a condition where cells that normally line the womb, grow in other places like the fallopian tubes and ovaries which can cause intense pain when they shed (during a period).

Symptoms could include:

- Pain in lower stomach or back
- Disabling period pain
- Pain during and after sex
- Pain urinating or pooing during your period
- Constipation
- Diarrhoea
- Difficulty getting pregnant.

A small number of people with endometriosis may have growth of womb tissue within their lungs - **thoracic endometriosis** meaning that they are more vulnerable to coronavirus infection. For further guidance please visit [Endometriosis Society UK](#).

It is important to call your GP if you suspect you may have endometriosis. Keeping an account of your pain and symptoms via this [diary](#) may help you to give as much information to your GP as possible.

So far there is no cure for this, but your GP will give you some options (other than ibuprofen and paracetamol) to manage the pain.

Pregnancy care

Those that are currently pregnant are likely to be particularly anxious at this time and there have been several changes to maternity services at this time. The changes do vary between maternity units but some you experience:

- No birthing partners allowed on the labour ward

- Wards divided between covid-19 positive and covid-19 negative patients
- The closure of birthing pools
- Staff on the unit in protective gear when managing both suspected and confirmed covid-19 patients

Pregnant people should be following the **social distancing** guidance, outlined above in this document.

Pregnant women have been placed in the '**vulnerable group**' category for COVID-19. This is not because there is any evidence to suggest that they are more likely to contract the infection. This is a precautionary measure as a small proportion of bodies will deal with infection differently whilst pregnant.

This is a new virus and more research is coming out every day. Currently there is some limited evidence that the virus can be transmitted to your baby (vertical transmission) although the proportion of pregnancies affected and the significance to the neonate has yet to be determined.

You can read more on the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists website on [coronavirus and pregnancy](#).

Menopause

During the pandemic most specialist menopause clinics have been cancelled but GPs will still be providing telephone consultations and face to face consultations (only if necessary). Prescriptions for medications to manage menopausal symptoms including hormone replacement therapy can be acquired by GP remote prescribing, postal prescription or [ordered privately on some online menopause clinics](#).

Some people already taking hormonal replacement therapy for their menopausal symptoms were already experiencing [medication shortages](#). It is possible that the current coronavirus pandemic may cause worsening medication shortages however, this has not been confirmed.

For the most up to date advice on menopause management please visit the [British Menopause Society](#)

Support for Domestic Abuse Survivors

Unfortunately, domestic abuse is on the rise throughout the country and during these critical times it is likely that episodes of abuse are also likely to increase. We are aware that the window of opportunity for those to access help and support has now become even smaller, particular if you are someone who lives with a perpetrator.

Every situation of domestic abuse is different, but there are some common factors that are important to be aware of in order to prevent and stop abuse from continuing.

Some of these signs can present as

- **Destructive criticism and verbal abuse** in the form of shouting; mocking; accusing
- **Pressure tactics** in the form of sulking; threatening to withhold money, disconnecting the phone and internet.
- **Disrespect** in the form of persistently putting you down in front of other people; not listening or responding when you talk.
- **Breaking trust** in the form of lying to you; withholding information from you; being jealous.
- **Isolation** in the form of monitoring or blocking your phone calls, emails and social media accounts.
- **Harassment** in the form of following you; checking up on you; not allowing you any privacy.
- **Threats** in the form of making angry gestures; using physical size to intimidate; shouting you down.
- **Sexual violence** in the form of using force, threats or intimidation to make you perform sexual acts; having sex with you when you don't want it.
- **Physical violence** in the form of punching; slapping; hitting; biting; pinching; kicking
- **Denial** in the form of saying the abuse doesn't happen; saying you caused the abuse; saying you wind them up.

According to Women's Aid, "[domestic abuse as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer. It is very common. In the vast majority of cases it is experienced by women and is perpetrated by men.](#)" But with that being said, domestic abuse is not something that only affects women.

If you are someone you know finds yourself in this situation, help is available.

Earlier this week, Refuge launched an [Online Survivor's Guide](#), giving survivors practical support during the COVID-19 outbreak.

[Silent Solutions](#) - This is a system for victims of domestic abuse who might be afraid of further danger and escalation of harm if they are overheard when calling 999 in an emergency

[Supportline](#) provides a confidential telephone helpline and email counselling service. Particularly to those at risk of abuse or are isolated.

[The Survivors' Forum](#) is an online resource for survivors of domestic abuse. The Survivors' forum can be accessed 24/7. This is a place where survivors can support each other and share their experiences.

[Victim Support \(VS\)](#) is an independent charity dedicated to supporting victims of crime and traumatic incidents in England and Wales.

[SISTAH SPACE](#) works with African heritage women and girls who have experienced domestic or sexual abuse and those who have lost a loved one to domestic violence.

[Broken Rainbow](#) the LGBT domestic violence charity

[FORWARD](#) (Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development) is the leading African women-led organisation working to end violence against women and girls.

[Southall Black Sisters](#) are a fast paced dynamic and leading advocacy service working to highlight and challenge all forms of gender-related violence against women

Support for Sexual Violence

[The Havens](#) are specialist centres in London for people who have been raped or sexually assaulted.

They operate 3 sites across London at Whitechapel, Camberwell and Paddington. At present they are still operating a normal service with only a few adjustments. Individuals can self-refer over the phone or referral can be made on their behalf via 0203 299 6900. Individuals will then be matched with a crisis worker who will manage their needs accordingly. Emergency Contraception (EC), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), vaccinations and full STI and HIV testing are still being provided.

Forensic examinations are also still being provided, but have some limitations

All counselling services are going to be virtual.

[SurvivorsUK](#) - help sexually abused men as well as their friends and family.

In an emergency, call 999.

Taking care of your Mental Health

The COVID-19 situation is daunting and stress inducing, so don't feel alone in your panic. But during this time, it is important to look after your mental health as much as possible and here a few suggestions that might be useful.

Plan a daily routine

While in this period of social distancing and self-isolation, create a **daily routine** and include **regular breaks** and even some time outside (up to 60 minutes of exercise). This will help you to be a little less overwhelmed, but also allow you to have structure and a little more discipline throughout the day. Whilst at home you can even use the time to pick up some additional hobbies or interests.

Reduce your engagement with news

Whilst important to stay informed, it might be a good idea to limit your engagement with fear inducing content. Watching the news is important, but the situation is unlikely to change for a while. Try to limit yourself to watching news bulletins every other day or even weekly and be sure to only engage with **reputable sources** and not propaganda or scare-mongering content. Some Facebook groups or WhatsApp groups can be the breeding ground for such content, so why not even think about muting some groups or even removing yourself altogether. Being a part of unhealthy networks is not productive so be mindful about what you choose to engage with.

Stay connected

Be sure to create accountability groups or circles with friends or colleagues. If you have tasks you have to complete by a certain date or time, share the burden by allowing them to hold you to account. This shouldn't feel overbearing or like micromanagement. Instead, it should just be a friendly reminder that although they're not physically in your space **they care about what you're doing** and want to see you well, happy and productive. This includes setting goals and reaching targets. Although you may not be in your usual work environment, **your work still counts**. Use this time also to email and text but most importantly schedule in voice and video calls with family friends and colleagues to check in on them and vice versa.

Below are a few links to some useful services and content to help you through this sensitive time. Be sure to remember **you're not alone** and we are all managing this situation the best way we know how.

Mental health charities and helplines:

- [NHS Mental Health Helplines](#)
- [The Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [Mind - For better mental health](#)
- [Time to Change](#)

- [Rethink](#)
- [The family lockdown guide: how to emotionally prepare for coronavirus quarantine](#)

[Doctors of the World](#) are an independent humanitarian movement working at home and abroad to empower excluded people to access healthcare

They have created Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice for patients in 21 languages, which were produced in partnership with the British Red Cross, Migrant Help and Clear Voice: English, Albanian, Dari, French, Pashto, Portuguese, Bengali, Vietnamese, Kurdish Sorani is available at the moment, but more languages coming soon: Mandarin, Hindi, Urdu, Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, Malayalam, Turkish, , Farsi, Amharic, Tigrinya, Somali

Please find them here:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=193qQN9l04Dvf0N9L5zeWTiXK_DRbrAsg

The guidance is based on the government's updated advice and health information. We really hope it will help to ensure this important guidance reaches migrant and asylum-seeking communities in the UK.

Please share these with your networks widely so that we reach all communities who would like this crucial information in their own language.

Additional resources and wellness tools

Online Exercise:

- [Les Mills Exercise series : Free 2 months trial](#)
- [Peloton - exercise videos - Free 3 month trial](#)
- [Online Ballet for kids, parents and grandparents](#)

Free/ low-cost online wellness by POC, Womxn and Queer folks (source: @worn__ware) :

- **@omgirllalli** free daily community meditation via FB + IG live or Zoom
- **@liberatemeditation** free app, specifically by and for POC
- **@alexrodriguezyoga** meditation via IG Live
- **@edynloveslife** yoga on YouTube led by plus-size instructor Edyn Jacks
- **@staylightwithliz** private breathwork, asana, meditation, vinyasa, yin and restorative sessions using Zoom or FaceTime
- **@hyperbody** abs, HIIT and aerobics videos via Vimeo
- **@ponysweat** free one-hour dance aerobics video on YouTube, monthly 30-minute video sent to email subscribers, free live stream classes to those who are unable to pay
- **@theunderbellyyoga** yoga class app taught by Jessamyn Stanley
- **@iamrachelricketts** free meditations on the InsightTimer app

Free e-books and online reading:

- [10 Haymarket books](#)
- [Oxford University Press - Free Resources](#)
- [Free Magazines](#)

Listening list

- [Queenie](#) by Candice Carty-Williams
- [Hidayah podcast](#) - stories told by queer Muslims navigating their religion and sexuality.
- [Code Switch](#) podcast - fearless conversations about race by journalists of colour.
- [Nancy podcast](#) - queer stories hosted by two Asian American journalists.
- [1 free audiobook](#) - 30-day trial
- [Free Audiobooks](#) from Open Culture
- Living in this queer body psychotherapist-led [podcast](#) about barriers to embodiment featuring interviews with queer folks

Free watching list

- [Femmes of Colour online comedy night - live on Instagram at 7pm GMT](#)
- [Chewing Gum](#) - award winning comedy about a girl on a mission to find out about sex
- [Pose](#) - 1980s drama set during AIDS epidemic
- [Mimi on a mission: Sex Ed](#) - documentary about the wonderful world of sex, love and relationships.
- [Enterprise](#) - comedy by Kayode Ewumi. Dreaming big and escaping the hustle.

Free online courses made by universities across the world

- [Open University Free courses](#)
- [Future Learn courses](#)
- [Class central courses](#)

LGBTQIA+ helplines

- [Switchboard LGBT Helpline](#)
- [LGBT+ Muslim support network](#)
- [The Mermaids](#) provide a helpline aimed at supporting transgender youth up to and including the age of 19. Free transgender chatline via 0808 801 0400
- [LondonFriend](#) - LGBT Mental Health and Wellbeing Charity
- [Galop](#) is the UK's only specialist LGBT+ anti-violence charity.

Causes to support

- Please sign the petition for healthcare professionals to get [coronavirus testing and personal protective equipment.](#)
- Please sign petition to make progesterone pill available [over the counter](#)
- Letter condemning population matters over [eugenics and climate change](#)

- Familiarise yourself with the [Windrush Report Findings](#)

Funding to support community development during COVID-19

- [The London Community Response Fund](#)
- [Young Futures Foundation](#)
- [Small business grant for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure](#)
- [The National Lottery Community Fund](#)
- [The Open Society Foundation](#)

Due to COVID-19 many organisations and other support services are closing their face to face services and operating differently in accordance with advice from the UK Government.
Nonetheless, we hope that the information we've provided in this guide is useful and allows you to stay safe and access appropriate support during this time.

We at DC are a collective of multi-skilled individuals who are all keen and empowered to address sexual and reproductive health needs in a way that meets the needs of people of colour.

We are a diverse bunch of professionals working in the sexual and reproductive health space, consisting of academics, activists, doctors, community workers, journalists, musicians and more.

You can find out more about the work that we do via our website -
<https://www.decolonisingcontraception.com/>

Here you will find a selection of videos to watch, articles to read and of course meet our amazing team!

We hope you find comfort and empowerment in this guide to support you in managing your sexual health and wellbeing during this difficult time.

Although the next few months ahead look challenging, we hope that our suggested resources and tools help to inspire change, creativity and hope that better days are yet to come, because we will all be better people.

Stay safe and connected.

“You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.”

—Maya Angelou

In solidarity

The Decolonising Contraception (DC) Collective