

What's happening now is new, unpredictable and no one has done it before! We are all working flat out and over time that means our emotional and physical health suffers.

This bulletin is intended to offer practical ways for you to look after yourself – like the airline advice, always put your own gas mask on before attending to someone else!

The information here is nothing new, but an aide-memoire in these incredibly difficult and unchartered times.

Let us know what help you feel you need and we will do the work to find information and suggestions.

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Website support

[One You South Glos](#)

[Mind You](#) (South Glos - for young people)

[BBC website](#)

[MIND](#)

[Rethink](#)

[Young Minds](#)

[Anna Freud](#)

[NHS every mind matters](#)

About diet. Your appetite might change if your routine changes, or if you're less active than you usually are. Keeping your blood sugar stable can help your mood and energy levels (*see page 2 for more advice on gut health*).

Drinking enough water is important for your mental and physical health. Changing your routine might affect when you drink or what fluids you drink.

Improve your mood

Be kind to yourself

Try to break big tasks down into manageable chunks, and do not try to do everything at once. Give yourself credit when you complete each bit.

Challenge unhelpful thoughts

The way we think affects the way we feel.

Being physically active

There are many studies which have shown that being physically active can improve mental health. For example, it can help with:

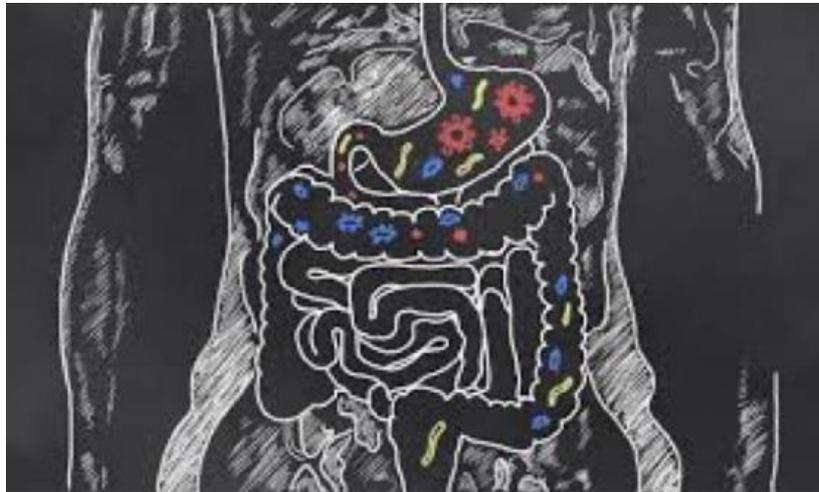
- **better sleep** – by making you feel more tired at the end of the day.
- **happier moods** – physical activity releases feel-good hormones that make you feel better in yourself and give you more energy.
- **Managing stress, anxiety or intrusive and racing thoughts** – doing something physical releases cortisol which helps us manage stress. Being physically active also gives your brain something to focus on and can be a positive coping strategy for difficult times.

Tips, advice and guidance on how to keep or get active in and around your home.

[Sport England – Stay in, Work out](#)

This is general advice, not intended to replace any advice given by the NHS or health professionals. Let's kick off with: **Gut Health**

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A whopping 70% of the immune system is located in our gastrointestinal tract aka the GUT. The gut is populated by beneficial bacteria (think the stuff that's advertised in pots of Yakult), collectively called the microbiome. These little guys play an essential role in defence against pathogens, metabolism and the formation of nutrients that have antioxidant and immune enhancing properties.

In short, our gut health is key to supporting our immune system and our microbiome is our own internal army so to speak. Part of its' role is as security team to our intestinal wall, contributing significantly to its barrier function. It achieves this through space occupation (crowding out the bad stuff), secretion of anti-microbial chemicals and supporting gut integrity.

So how can we boost our own gut health and in turn support our own immunity?

Regularly eat probiotic-rich food: kefir, natural yogurt, fermented vegetables such as sauerkraut and kimchi and drink kombucha. You can now readily get these foods from the supermarket (worth the queue) and good news they have a great shelf life. If your feeling more adventurous you can have a go making them yourself. BBC Good Food recipe [here!](#)

Feed the microbiome with fibre-rich foods (aim for 20g per day) such as cruciferous veg (cauli, broccoli, cabbage etc), onions, garlic, leeks, flaxseeds and whole grains.

Be happy to keep your microbiome happy! One of the ways friendly bacteria works is to crowd out unwanted bacteria. But if you have a poor diet and lifestyle their colonies will reduce in size. Stress, sugar, artificial sweeteners, alcohol, smoking all have a damaging effect, so try and keep to a minimum.

Worried about a member of staff?

When someone is carrying around worries and difficult feelings, it can feel very lonely. Taking time to listen can help someone work through what's going on and feel better able to cope.

You don't have to be an expert to help someone open up when something's up. You don't even need to be in the same room or location. The fact that you care is what matters.

Set up a staff group via WhatsApp for example, and use it to maintain contact when staff are working at home, are self-isolating or shielding. Arrange a regular 'check in' time and send a smile or thumbs up. It needn't be a lengthy 'chat' just a way to connect regularly.

Samaritans have [some tips](#) to help recognise when something might be up, to open up a conversation and be a good listener. These have been adapted slightly in the 4 boxes on this page to adhere with current social distancing guidelines:

1 – How to 'spot' when something might be up

These are some of the signs that someone may not be ok:

- Not wanting to do things they usually enjoy.
- Finding everyday things overwhelming.
- Not replying to messages, or being distant.
- Avoiding contact or seeming quiet.
- Restless or agitated.
- Easily tearful.

2 – How to open up a conversation

Don't be shy to ask how someone's feeling:

- Choose a good time, without distractions.
- Use open questions that need more than a yes/no answer - 'How are things?' - 'You don't seem quite yourself.'
- Listen well - 'How's that making you feel?'
- Avoid giving your view of what's wrong, or what they should do.

3 – How to be a good listener

Showing you care builds trust to open up:

- Make sure there are no other distractions.
- Focus completely on the other person.
- Pauses are fine, try not to jump in to fill a silence.
- Say back what you think it is they are wanting you to hear.
- Resist putting your own interpretation on it.
- Don't give up. Sometimes it can take a few tries!

4 – How to help someone get more help

If it feels like the person is really struggling to cope:

- 'Would you like to get some help?'
- 'Is there someone else you'd like to talk to?'
- 'Have you tried your GP?'
- 'Did you know you don't have to be feeling suicidal to call Samaritans?'
- 'Samaritans is free, 24 hours a day if you're feeling low or worried too.'
- 'If it helps, you can talk to me any time.'

Some information to share with pupils:

There have been big changes in our lives because of coronavirus, so the Children's Commissioner has created a children's guide to coronavirus to help explain the situation.

The guide aims to answer children's questions about coronavirus, tell children how to stay safe and protect other people and how to help them make the best of their time at home.

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/cco-childrens-guide-to-coronavirus.pdf>

A variety of online advice and guidance for older pupils is available on the council's [Mind You website](#). This is being updated regularly in response to information we are being asked for. If you have any comments please contact Rebecca Loaring REBECCA.LOARING@southglos.gov.uk