**Post-COVID symptoms (long COVID) in children and young people – Social life**

If you have had COVID-19 (coronavirus) you might have symptoms that last for a few weeks or months. This is sometimes called post-COVID or long COVID. This information gives you some ideas of things you can do to make sure that you get back to your normal activities as easily and quickly as possible.

**Staying in touch with friends**

Being unwell for any length of time can affect keeping in touch with and seeing friends. It is important to keep in touch with friends and have a social life, even when symptoms make this more challenging.

Losing touch with people because of illness can knock your confidence. Your parents, teacher, healthcare professionals and friends can help think of ways to help stay connected with people.

**The balance between doing too much or too little**

* Friends can help you to stay positive and get back into activities including school. Spend a few minutes a day, or some time each week, socialising.
* Message or talk to friends one-to-one.
* Keep up with a group or team if you can.
* Do activities online together if you cannot manage face-to-face. Build up to other activities such as going to a cafe, having a meal, meeting in the park, shopping or doing physical activity such as walking, yoga or gentle sport together.
* Try to stick to your plan, even if you are having a bad day. Try not to do more on good days or less on bad days.
* Let your family and friends know your plan so they can support you or come up with ideas of how to make things easier.

**Keep in touch by texting and phoning**

* Texting or messaging is a good way to keep in touch, but try not to overdo it. You are using mental energy when sitting down and using social media.
* Try to stick to a set amount of time. You might find it helpful to set an alarm to remind you to ‘switch off’.
* Catch up on news and gossip at regular times rather than spending hours online.
* Social media can be a good way to stay in touch for a short amount of time each day. However, depending on the content you are viewing, it might not be as helpful for recovery. Stick to contact with friends and family.

**Start seeing 1 friend at a time**

* Start by having 1 friend over for an agreed amount of time.
* Choose a day that is not before a day at school or other significant activity.
* It might be helpful to ask your parent or other adult to let your friend know when they need to go. This way you will not feel embarrassed telling your friend that they should leave.
* Once you can manage 1 or 2 hours at your home, you could try visiting them in their home or out somewhere.
* It can be easier to meet a friend out or at their house so you can control the time you spend together.

**Awkward questions**

Are you worried that your friends will ask awkward questions about why you have been off school and when you will be back?

* Prepare a simple, straightforward explanation and practice saying it out loud. Perhaps a parent or other family member can help.
* Do not be afraid to say things like:
	+ ‘My doctors don’t know yet’
	+ ‘We’re planning things one step at a time’
	+ ‘It depends on how I get on with this part of the plan’
* When you feel you have given enough information, change the subject by asking your friend a question about their life.

**Next steps**

If your symptoms continue for several months after having COVID-19, and you are concerned that you are not getting better, please speak to your GP.

For more help with long COVID symptoms, you can go to our other resources:

* eating well
* emotional wellbeing
* going back to school
* keeping active
* sleeping well