

# Information for patients admitted to hospital with COVID-19

COVID-19 can cause minor to serious illness.

You have been admitted to hospital with COVID-19 so that we can monitor your breathing. Your breathing may need to be supported with oxygen and sometimes with a ventilator (artificial breathing). We also want to help with any symptoms you may have.

This leaflet will explain what treatment you may receive, and what support will be available.

## What treatment will I receive?

Alongside active measures to treat the disease, it is important that we reduce the distress that you may experience. This is done through treating your symptoms:

- *Breathlessness* can be improved by keeping as calm and relaxed as possible, but if your breathlessness gets worse, we will use medication to help with this. Morphine is the most common medicine used. Although usually given for pain, morphine can be used safely to relieve the feeling of breathlessness.
- *Cough* can also be relieved by morphine.
- *Anxiety* can be common; medicines used to help with this symptom include lorazepam and midazolam.
- *Restlessness* can occur if you develop a fever and this can be controlled using paracetamol.

All medicines will be given regularly and when you need them. If you become unable to swallow the medicine, it can be given as an injection either through a vein or under the skin.

In the most serious cases, COVID-19 can severely affect the lungs, stopping them from working normally. A ventilator may be used to move air into and out of the lungs to help you breathe. You may need to be on a ventilator for several days until your lungs are able to work properly again.

## Can I decide how I am treated?

You should talk to the doctors about what is important to you. You may have preferences about how and when certain actions should be taken. For example, when to start ventilation or whether to restart the heart if it stops. The doctors will take your views into consideration together with your medical condition. Difficult decisions about your medical care may need to be made quickly if you become unwell so it is important that you let the medical team know what you want them to do. If you are unsure, please discuss this with a member of the medical team.

## How can I communicate with those important to me?

There are strict isolation rules in place both outside and inside the hospital, which means that you may not be allowed visitors. Any visitors will have to wear personal protective equipment (otherwise known as PPE – face masks etc.). Where possible, ward staff will try to help you communicate with people important to you by telephone or video calls. Please let the ward staff know if you are happy for them to share information in this way and if there are specific people you wish to be kept informed.



This information leaflet was compiled by Dr Sabrina Bajwah (Cicely Saunders Institute, King's College London) with extensive input from co-authors and patient/carer groups to accompany the ERJ editorial "Managing the supportive care needs of those affected with COVID-19". Please cite this editorial as follows:

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## Can I get additional support?

We understand that this is a difficult time. You may want to talk about how you feel. Please ask a member of the ward staff to contact any of the following support services that are available to you:

List of local hospital support services: