

# Back in lockdown: adjusting to the new rules: information for families

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We knew that 2020 was going to be a strange year and it's certainly feeling like the weirdness isn't coming to an end yet. Now that England is back in lockdown (other parts of the UK have been in lockdown or faced restrictions already), it is understandable that everyone is feeling tired, confused and nervous about what the future will bring. We may have enjoyed having the freedom to do things like meet friends, go shopping or just do 'everyday' stuff but now we're faced with having to stop doing all that again – it's understandable to feel a bit nervous.

It can be difficult to know 'the new rules' about what we can do and where, especially when for children and young people, life is a bit more normal, going to school and seeing friends there. The Patient Experience team understand this mess of feelings so has compiled this information sheet to help everyone adjust to being back in lockdown.

At GOSH, this second lockdown will feel very different to our experience in the spring:

- We understand the virus far better and are well prepared to keep everyone safe if we all follow the rules to reduce the spread of infection.
- This time, we will carry on our everyday work, treating children and young people who need us. Our services are continuing to recover so we're back to the levels of activity before COVID-19.

## We managed it before

After the first lockdown, it should be easy to adjust to going back into lockdown but this depends to a great extent on your experience last time.

If you struggled last time, think about which aspects you found hard – was it being cut off from family and friends or finding it difficult to switch off and relax?

Perhaps focus on dealing with the things you found difficult last time to see if you can make it easier second time around.

Find out what support there is in your local community and get in touch with them to see how they can help. Many of the 'mutual aid' groups are still going strong so see what they can offer.

## What helped last time?

As well as thinking about what you found hard with the first lockdown, think about what positives there were too.



Many families found activities they all enjoyed and could do together - connected to nature during lockdown, watching birds outside the window and listening to their birdsong.

Try to schedule some time each week to carry on with these activities as 'family time' when work and other stresses are put to one side.

## Focus on things you can control

It may seem like lots of people are (and have been) breaking lockdown rules but it won't help to worry about what other people are doing.

If you believe that what someone else is doing is putting you and your family at risk, try to concentrate on what you as a family can control.

Continue to practise hand hygiene and social distancing. Encourage others around you to do the same and try not to get cross with people who aren't 'following the rules'.

## Talk about what's changing and how you all feel

An important part of resilience is the ability to talk about how you're feeling. Encourage everyone in the family to open up about their feelings – you could use artwork, writing or emojis if this is easier.

Help your child to recognise that what they are feeling emotionally might be causing physical reactions, such as, butterflies in the stomach.

Remember, change is difficult for everyone but what we can do is try to control how we react to change, even if we can't control what's changing.

## Don't plan too much for lockdown

The first time we went into lockdown, lots of people made plans to learn a new skill or take up a new hobby and then felt bad if everyday life got in the way.

This time round, try not to plan too many new things and concentrate on living life day to day, taking care of yourself and your family as best you can. You will have learnt things from the first lockdown that you can apply this time – remember these and put your emphasis on these rather than learning something new.

## To shield or not to shield

If you or your child were shielding when the first lockdown happened, it can be difficult to decide what to do. Although the Government advice to people who were shielding last time is 'to be very careful', it can be difficult to know what this means in practice.

In most cases, your children should still go to school – your clinical team can advise you if this isn't the case – but it is sensible to limit the time you spend in crowded places for instance.

Again, the most important thing is to wash or sanitise your hands frequently, wear a face mask when you need to and keep a safe distance from others.

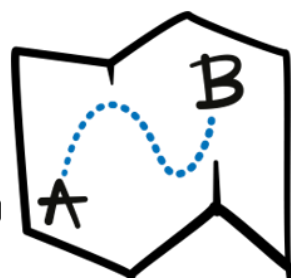
## Stick to a routine

While England is in lockdown, life for many children and young people continues, with most back at school, at least some of the time. Try to develop a routine around the school day – perhaps when the children are at school, you could have some 'me' time where you focus on your needs.

## Limit news and social media

You may have tried to ignore the news and social media during the first lockdown or been glued to it for hours, but now could be a good time to set yourself limits for how long you spend each day.

Perhaps pick two or three times during the day to look at the news or social media and turn off notifications. When possible, put down your



mobile phone outside these times, and focus on other activities.

## Money worries

A lot of families have had money worries during lockdown, particularly if they have not been working. Remember that there are people at GOSH (and elsewhere in your community) who can help. Look at the suggestions at the end of this information for further details.

## Recognise 'down days'

We all have days where we feel more 'down' than others and this is completely normal in everyday life, let alone during lockdown. Realise that everyone else is feeling like this and don't beat yourself up if you have a bad day or two. If you are struggling and would like to talk to someone, there are lots of people at GOSH who can help – see the suggestions below.

## Have some 'me' time

For many people, lockdown has shown the importance of having downtime or time on your own. Even within the family, everyone should have a chance to be alone if they want to – whether it's going for a walk or having a relaxing soak in the bath after the children have gone to bed.

If you've been working from home during lockdown, it is just as important to balance your work and home life as when everything was normal. It can be tempting to have a quick look at emails when you get up or before bed, but it is far healthier to stick to your usual work hours and then put away your laptop or phone or turn off notifications overnight.

## Feeling alone

If you felt isolated during the first lockdown, think about how you can stay in touch with family and friends this time around. Some have found comfort in doing online activities together, such as Zoom quiz nights or setting challenges such as playlists of music on a particular theme.

The important thing is to keep the lines of communication open – if you are struggling, tell someone – there are lots of people at GOSH who can help as well as national organisations and helplines or in your local area.

## Look after yourself

During the first lockdown, you might not have been looking after yourself as well as you usually would. Many people found they ate different or more food during the first lockdown or their sleep was disturbed.

Try to find ways as a family to make sure everyone looks after their wellbeing as this will help you to cope this time around as well as when life slowly gets back to as normal as possible.

## Ask for help if you're worried

If your child shows any changes in their behaviour or you are worried that you can't help, ask for support from your family doctor (GP) in the first instance. They will be able to talk to you about sources of support in your local area and how to access them.

If you are struggling, and would like to talk, there are lots of people at GOSH who can help – see the suggestions below. This can be as simple as having a chat with your specialist nurse or we can arrange more formal support with our psychology team. Don't be afraid to ask for help. You are an important part of your child's team, and we are here to support you throughout this challenging time.



## Further information and support

At GOSH, **psychosocial teams** are groups of highly trained professionals, including social workers, family support workers, play specialists, family therapy and clinical psychologists, with expertise in caring for children, young people and families in hospital. All wards and departments can get in touch with the psychosocial service.

The **Social Work** team can help you check that you are getting all the support you need and liaise with services closer to home to help you. Call them on 020 7829 8896 Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. Out of hours or in an emergency, please contact the Clinical Site Practitioner on 020 7405 9200 bleep 0313.

The **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (Pals)** team can give you confidential advice and support about any issues that crop up while you are visiting or staying at GOSH. Drop into the office in main reception, call them on 020 7829 7862 or email [pals@gosh.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gosh.nhs.uk)

The **Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care** team offer spiritual, religious and pastoral care to staff, families, and children of all faiths or none. They visit the wards regularly and also provide a 24-hour on-call service every day of the year. Visit the Chaplaincy Office by St Christopher's Chapel, ask a member of the ward team to contact them or email [GOSH.Chaplaincy@gosh.nhs.uk](mailto:GOSH.Chaplaincy@gosh.nhs.uk)

The **Children's Hospital School** can offer support and advice about any education issues, including resources for activities at home. Have a look at their webpages at [www.gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/hospital-facilities-and-services/welcome-childrens-hospital-school](http://www.gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/hospital-facilities-and-services/welcome-childrens-hospital-school).

**Support organisations** for specific conditions can be very helpful and the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (Pals) at GOSH can put you in touch with a relevant organisation. The umbrella organisation Contact (previously called Contact a Family) produces helpful information sheets. You can telephone them on 0808 808 3555 or visit their website at [www.contact.org.uk](http://www.contact.org.uk)

**Sibs** is a UK organisation especially for children, young people and adults with a brother or sister who is ill or has additional needs. As well as information, they hold regular family days so your other children can meet others in a similar situation. Visit their website at [www.sibs.org.uk](http://www.sibs.org.uk) for further details.

**Mind** and **Young Minds** can offer advice and support about mental health problems – call their helpline on 0808 802 5544 or visit their websites at [www.mind.org.uk/](http://www.mind.org.uk/) and [youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk)

**Family Lives** (formerly Parentline Plus) is a registered charity that offers support to anyone parenting a child. Call them on 0808 800 2222 or visit their website at [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

The **Samaritans** offer emotional support to anyone in distress. Call their helpline on 116 123 (you don't need a dialling code), email [Jo@samaritans.org](mailto:Jo@samaritans.org) or visit their website at [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

**Adviceguide** is the online Citizen's Advice Bureau service that gives you information on a wide range of topics, including benefits and employment, and debt and legal issues. Visit their website at [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

