

# Treatments for COVID-19 in hospital

A guide to the  
different methods  
used for patients

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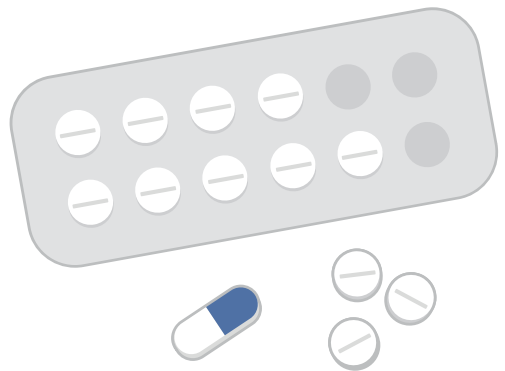
Coronavirus (COVID-19) is highly contagious but most people who catch it, will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment.

Older people, people who have underlying medical problems, and people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups are more likely to become seriously unwell and die as a result of COVID-19. Underlying medical problems could include cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer.

## Treatments for COVID-19 in hospital

Some people who catch COVID-19 will become seriously unwell and need treatment in hospital. Our doctors, nurses and healthcare assistants will do everything they can to look after you and help you recover.

COVID-19 is a very new disease but we know much more about how to treat it now, than we did during the first wave. If you experience symptoms, the sooner you seek advice and treatment, the more likely it is that you will recover from the disease.



## Medication for patients who have COVID-19

Research trials have enabled us to find some new medication that has shown to be working well, when given to patients in the early stages of their illness. All medication will be considered on an individual basis depending on the needs of the patient.

**Anti-viral drugs and steroids** have been shown to slow down the progression of the disease

and stop some people from getting severely unwell.

**Antibiotics** are not used to treat COVID-19 but some patients may get a secondary infection as a result of their bodies trying to fight the disease. If this happens, you will be given antibiotics to treat the infection alongside other treatments and care for COVID-19.

### Alternative treatments

Patients may be given the option to participate in a research trial as part of their treatment and the decision to do so, may result in access to alternative treatments that are only available through a trial. The trials are completely randomised which means that you can't choose what treatment you get.



## Support with your breathing

COVID-19 can affect your ability to breathe properly on your own. When this happens, there are some things that can be done to support you in hospital.

**Oxygen** can be given when your levels are low, depending on how much you need, through a mask. Oxygen is a common treatment for COVID-19 patients who have

symptoms and is most effective when patients seek help during the early stages of illness.

If you do not have very low levels of oxygen, but have a probability of getting worse because of other contributory factors such as your age and existing health conditions, you will be given oxygen to reduce the chance of you getting severely unwell.



## Critical care

Most COVID-19 cases that require hospital treatment can be cared for on a general hospital ward but in some cases, patients may need to be transferred to a critical care ward, for more intensive support.

**Ventilation** is offered as a last resort, to support your body with breathing, when no other measures to improve oxygen levels are working. It does not cure COVID-19 but means that your body is having to do less work, to give it more strength to fight the disease. The ventilator is a method used to try and get some oxygen into the lungs and bloodstream and it also gives the lungs time to rest and recover. If you need to be ventilated, you will be put to sleep and given pain relief so you are comfortable and unaware of what is happening. You will not feel breathless because the machine is taking over the breathing function for you.

Many people associate ventilation with dying because the mortality rate for COVID-19 is high, but ventilators do not cause death, they are used as a treatment for the most unwell patients. Without ventilation, very unwell patients are at a higher risk of organs failing or suffering a cardiac arrest and not surviving. Unfortunately, sometimes people are so affected by the disease that no amount of help improves their oxygen levels.



## Critical care

A **Tracheostomy** is an opening created at the front of the neck so a tube can be inserted into the windpipe (trachea, pictured) to help you breathe. The tube is then connected to a ventilator. This method is used when patients are finding it difficult to tolerate the ventilator tube that is inserted down the throat. Inserting the tube into the throat is often easier to tolerate and means that when your lungs



start to get better, you will be weaned off the ventilator to allow you to do some of your breathing yourself. At this stage, you will start to become less reliant on the support and may feel able to communicate more which will support your recovery.

**Proning** is used when oxygen levels are critically low and involves you being physically placed on your front to improve the distribution of air in the lungs. This technique is used to prevent the need for ventilation but can also be used at the same time to increase the even distribution of ventilator volumes throughout the lungs.

In some cases, patients may deteriorate and need organ support because of the damage that the disease has done to their body. The medication or treatment offered will depend on the body function that needs it and will vary depending on the patient and their current situation.

## Reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19

The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. There are three simple rules that are proven to be effective in reducing the spread of the virus.

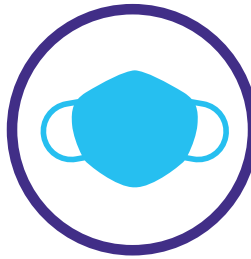
**Hands** Wash your hands more often.

**Face** Cover your face with a face covering or mask.

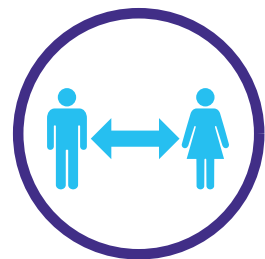
**Space** Make space of at least 2 metres between you and anyone else outside of your household.



**Hands**



**Face**



**Space**



**Bolton**

HS Foundation Trust