



**Cúram Sláinte
Phobail, Iarthar**
ag freastal ar Ghailimh,
Maigheo agus Ros Comáin

**Community
Healthcare West**
serving Galway, Mayo
and Roscommon



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Keep Well

**Advice and Information
for Older Adults**

-  **Stay Active**
-  **Stay Connected**
-  **Switch Off**
-  **Eat Well**
-  **Mind Your Mood**

during the

Coronavirus
COVID-19



pandemic



Contents | Clár

Welcome	Alma Joyce & Dr.Michelle Canavan	Page 1
	Dr. Jarlath Deignan & Mary McGann	Page 2
Stay Active	The benefits of staying active	Page 3
	Small changes to boost our activity levels	Page 4
	The Walking Programme	Page 5
	Virtual Exercise Options	Page 6
Stay Connected	Benefits of a routine	Page 7
	5 Tips to Create a Routine	Page 8
	Stay Connected to People	Page 9
	Sample Routine	Page 10
Switch Off	Benefits of Switching Off	Page 11
Eat Well	Benefits of a balanced diet	Page 12
	Galway Meals on Wheels contact details	Page 13
	How food influences our brain function	Page 14
Mind Your Mood	The benefits of minding your mood	Page 15
	Self-care strategies	Page 16
Galway Community Call Helpline	Page 17
Useful Contact Details	Back Page



We have created a series of informative videos to accompany this booklet.

The videos may be found by searching "Community Healthcare West" on www.youtube.com or by scanning the QR code here.



Welcome | Fáilte



Alma Joyce

*Occupational Therapist Manager
HSE Primary Care, Galway*

Welcome to our Keep Well during Covid-19 information booklet. This local initiative, aimed at older adults, is part of the Government Living Well During Covid Campaign. This originated from front line clinicians in the HSE in consultation with our colleagues in Galway County Council about the affects that the pandemic is having on people's health and well being.

We were equally inspired by the resilience that people in Galway have shown over the last number of months. We decided to put together a resource pack of evidence based strategies and tools, practical things that we can all do in our homes to keep ourselves well this winter.

I hope you find this booklet and the accompanying online resources useful. I would like to sincerely thank the HSE Primary Care Occupational Therapy staff and NUIG students in Galway whose advocacy for older people, skills and expertise in supporting people to live well have been one of the corner stones of this campaign.



Dr. Michelle Canavan

*Consultant Geriatrician
Galway Integrated Care Team for Older People*

COVID-19 has been very challenging for older people. Minding your health and wellbeing is so important. My advice is to keep moving around, even if it is just short walks around the house or garden.

Try and aim to do "something" in the morning and "something" in the afternoon. If you don't use it you lose it. It is also important to stay connected with other people and keep busy. This will help us all get through the next few months. If you feel your health has declined and you are struggling don't be afraid to ask for help and don't wait until things get worse. Talk to your GP or Public Health Nurse.

They may refer you to the Galway Integrated Care Team for older people, which is made up of a specialised medical, nursing and therapy team which will assess your needs and come up with a treatment plan. This team runs clinics in local primary care centres and tries to avoid people coming to the hospital where possible.



Dr. Jarlath Deignan

HSE GP Lead Galway North

General Practice remains open for business despite the restrictions imposed by COVID-19, although surgeries have had to adapt their working practices due to the pandemic.

We strongly advise that everyone follow the public health guidelines and can't stress enough the importance of handwashing, social distancing and the wearing of face masks. If you do develop a fever, cough or flu-like symptoms, please phone your GP in the first instance. Your doctor will deal with your symptoms over the phone and refer you for a COVID test if necessary. Such consultations and the test itself are free of charge to all.

As well as dealing with COVID-related queries, we are anxious that other medical issues are not ignored. We are particularly concerned that people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, COPD and heart disease continue to contact their GP for check-ups and monitoring. Equally, we advise that you contact us should you develop any unusual or worrying symptoms during this time, and they will be promptly dealt with. We would also remind everyone over 65 years to ensure they get the flu vaccine this winter and the pneumococcal (pneumonia) vaccine if they haven't got it already. The pandemic has created huge challenges for us all and has caused a lot of stress and a feeling of isolation for many people. By working together and supporting each other, we will stay healthy during this difficult time and can expect to return to some degree of normality in the near future.



Mary McGann

Administrative Officer Galway County Council

Since COVID-19 restrictions were introduced in March 2020 and we've been asked to stay apart, it's normal to feel anxious, worried or lonely, due to the loss of our routines and connections with other people.

The Government has implemented a national "Keep Well" Campaign which will run online, on TV and radio, and will provide a general booklet on keeping well over the winter months.

We have partnered with the HSE to target this booklet at older adults who may not have access to technology where online services may be found. We have ensured that this advice and information booklet can be delivered directly to those that need it.



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Galway County Community Call Helpline

1800 928 894 (freephone)

Email: covidsupport@galwaycoco.ie

STAY ACTIVE

Keep Active, Keep Steady, Keep Strong. Indoors and Out.

"Exercise not only changes your body; it changes your mind, your attitude, and your mood."



Advice from Fiona McCleane

*Senior Physiotherapist
Galway Integrated Care Team for Older People*

The Benefits of Staying Active



Good for the Body

Keeping on the move and exercising daily will help us to keep our muscles strong, improve our balance, help manage our weight and boost our mood and energy levels.



Good for the Mind

Our mood is lifted by the release of endorphins, which happens when we exercise and also by the sense of achievement we experience by setting and achieving our aims and goals.

Long-term Goals when Keeping Active

Adults of all ages should be physically active at a moderate intensity for at least 30 minutes a day, five times a week, aiming for 150 minutes a week.

For the best results and to reduce our risk of falls this activity should be a mix of:

- Strength exercises 2-3 times a week
- Balance exercises 3 times a week
- Cardiovascular exercises 5 times a week eg. walking, gardening, cycling, dancing, housework etc.

How to Stay Active with Small Changes:

Start small and build slowly to the guidelines above. This can be achieved by doing both formal exercise and using informal ways to boost our activity levels.

- **Formal Exercise includes:**
 - Walking programmes
 - Exercise programmes for strength and balance such as **Healthy Galway, 'Simple Exercises for you to do at Home'**
 - Virtual exercise classes, a new and supportive way to exercise at home.
 - Tracking your daily step count and building up your number of steps over days or weeks.
- **Informal Activities includes:**
 - Housework
 - Gardening
 - Dancing
 - Going up and down stairs
 - Washing the car
 - Walking rather than driving



Another way to informally increase our activity levels is to add boosts of exercise into our day but not all in one go. If you have been sitting for 30 minutes or more we would recommend you stand, straighten up and move around for a minute or two before resuming your task for example:

- Marching while sitting on or behind your chair during the ads of your favourite TV programme
- While the kettle boils hold the counter and do some knee bends, heel lifts or hip strengthening exercises
- Walking up and down your stairs a few extra times during the day.

For exercise to be effective the aim should be to work at a moderate intensity. You should be able to chat comfortably while exercising but unable to sing without getting out of breath.

All this activity adds up to make you stronger and fitter and may reduce your risk of falls especially if you are able to do your activity boosts in standing.

Walking Programme

A daily walk is a great place to start and is suitable for all walking abilities.



You should aim to:

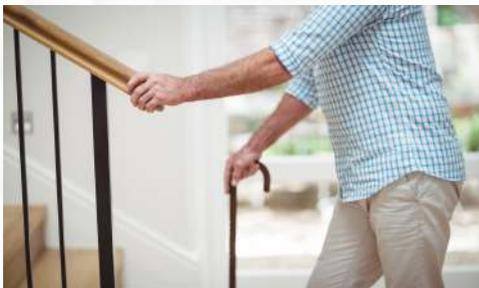
- Walk regularly (5 days a week)
- Walk at a moderate intensity (with a little bit of breathlessness)
- Walk all in one go (30 minutes plus) or in manageable amounts spread out through the day (5-10 minutes at a time)
- Consider using a diary to keep track of your walking achievements

Points to remember before starting this walking programme

- Talk to your GP if you have had a prolonged period of inactivity or have underlying medical conditions
- If you are really struggling with your walking or balance you may benefit from a referral to your Community Physiotherapist. This can be done by contacting your GP or PHN

Indoors

- **A walk from the kitchen to your front door and back again may be a great start if you haven't walked much lately. Repeat this until your legs start to feel tired.**
- Note how many laps you have done and how long it took. Gradually increase this walking time to five or ten minute bursts.



Outdoors

- **A walk outdoors is a great mood booster.**
- If you haven't walked outdoors for a while, ask a family member or carer to come with you for confidence.
- **Start your outdoor walking to your gate and back, then progress to two doors down and back gradually going further in both distance and time as you get stronger.**
- Begin with 5 or 10 min manageable amounts spread throughout the day.
- **If you are a confident and regular walker, complete your 30 min plus in one go.**
- To get the most out of your walk try different routes or if you do a loop vary the way you do it. This provides different challenges to the body and will improve your strength, fitness and balance.

Safety tips to consider

- **Always use your walking aid if you have one as this may allow you to walk further with more confidence.**
- Check that your walking aid is in good repair and the ferrules (rubber) on your stick or frame do not show signs of wear (right top).
- **It is important that the walking aid is at the correct height for you (right bottom).**
- Always wear comfortable and supportive shoes when walking indoors or outdoors.
- **Be prepared for the weather outdoors and on a wet or stormy day it may be safer to increase your exercise indoors rather than go for a walk.**



Virtual Exercise Options

Make Movement Your Mission

Daily live videos three times daily to encourage everyone to move more frequently throughout the day for muscles, mind and wellbeing.

Daily at 8am, 12pm and 4pm

If you are a member of Facebook, search for *Make Movement Your Mission* and request to join the group, then you can access the classes for free.

Siel Bleu Ireland

Life enhancing exercise programmes for Older Adults with the aim of improving overall wellbeing.

Facebook Live at 11am and YouTube at 2pm.

If you are a member of Facebook, search for *Siel Bleu Ireland*, like their page and you can view their classes daily through Facebook.

Galway Sports Partnership

Telephone 091 509572 / 509577 / 536459 or www.galwayactive.ie

Galway Sports Partnership organise a range of free events and classes for all ages and abilities so please feel free to contact them to find out what's available in your area. They also have produced a useful booklet for older adults on how to create a home exercise plan - you can contact the Galway Community Call "Helpline on 1800 92 88 94 to receive a free copy or other supports such as a Pedometer or Diary to track your walking.



Remember!

- **Start small and build your minutes, steps and distance slowly.**
- **Aim to have a mix of formal exercise, informal activity and exercise boosts throughout the day.**
- **If you feel unwell stop exercising, rest and consult your GP before you start again.**
- **Increasing your daily activity levels will help you to Keep Active, Keep Steady, Keep Strong.**



STAY CONNECTED

People are creatures of habit, and routines offer a way to promote health and wellness through structure and organisation. Staying connected with friends and loved ones, as well as maintaining a routine can greatly improve your health.

The Benefits of a Routine



Feel in control

Having a routine creates structure in your life and allows you to feel in control. This helps reduce stress by knowing what to expect throughout the day.



Sleep better

Maintaining a consistent sleep routine will help regulate the body's internal clock. This will allow you to get a much better sleep each night.



Keep your mind busy

Maintaining a healthy routine will keep your mind active and busy throughout the day. This can help promote healthy brain functioning and provide opportunities to exercise your brain.



Maintain function

Whether it's walking around in the garden or doing some chores inside, keeping your body moving can help keep your muscles strong and healthy.

Here's to taking the first step...

Taking the first step is not always easy. Remember to be kind to yourself during this difficult time. We have five tips to help you on your way to creating a healthy routine at home.



Plan and prepare

Setting small goals each day can help create a sense of fulfillment when they are achieved. Using a timetable or a diary can be helpful to jot down your plans for the day or week.



Seize the day

Having a regular morning routine can help prepare you for the day ahead. Have a healthy breakfast and attend to personal hygiene tasks.



Make it meaningful

Remember, this routine is all yours. Be creative and find new ways to do the things you love. Try to plan something each day that you can look forward to.



Find a balance

Although it is important to keep busy and exercise your body and mind, take time to unwind and relax every day. It's important to take time for yourself.





Stay connected to People

“Connecting with others give us a sense of inclusion, connection, interaction, safety and community.”

Social connections are the threads that bind together to create a community. We cannot take part in many of the activities which would have brought us together in our community, so we are asking everyone in our communities to take the following steps to stay connected:



- **T**ake the time to chat – we can get through this together
- **A**sk your neighbour how they're doing
- **L**et your neighbour have your contact details
- **K**eep in regular contact by telephone or video call

As an individual, you can also make positive changes to prevent you from feeling socially isolated or alone during these difficult times:

Pick up the Phone

Call your grandkids, family members or friends – or even an acquaintance you haven't spoken to in years. Your call might make their day as well as your own!

Try out Technology

If you have a friend or family member who can help you connect with technology, you can set up video calls with a group of friends, host a movie night together, or even join a club or class together.

Exercise at a safe distance

Ask a friend or family member for a “physically distanced” walk and chat and improve both your physical and emotional wellbeing.

Reach Out

If you feel do feel lonely, there are supports and services to which you can reach out for a chat, a regular call back, or to sign up for a befriending initiative in your local area.

Useful Resources to Stay Connected



Cope Galway Older Peoples Helpline:
085 876 7785



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Galway Community Call Helpline
1800 928 894

Need some ideas?

Why not try to follow the Sample Routine below, recommended by Teresa Higgins?



Morning

- 8am** | Breakfast
- 9am** | Personal care
- 10am** | Read the newspaper
- 12pm** | Ring a friend



Afternoon

- 1pm** | Lunch
- 2pm** | Short walk
- 3pm** | Video call with grandchildren / family



Evening

- 5pm** | Dinner
- 6pm** | Household chores
- 7pm** | Watch TV
- 9pm** | Relax before bed



Teresa Higgins

*Senior Occupational
Therapist
HSE Primary Care,
Galway*



Advice from Claire Harte

*Senior Occupational Therapist
HSE Primary Care, Galway*

“ Having a regular routine has great benefits for our health and wellbeing. It creates structure in our lives and provides us with a sense of predictability each day.

This can help reduce worries about the unknown and provides us with a sense of comfort”.

”

If you feel you may benefit from advice to fully participate in your everyday activities, please contact Galway Primary Care Occupational Therapy by emailing:

galway_pcot@hse.ie

SWITCH OFF

Advice from Esther Linnane

Occupational Therapist,
HSE Primary Care, Galway



Find an activity that you enjoy!



Keeping your brain active is essential for brain health. Keep active by challenging yourself regularly, you can do this by:

✓
Learning a new language - this stimulates different areas of your brain

✓
Doing Puzzles, Crosswords and Quizzes - keeps your mind sharp

✓
Doing crafts or cooking promotes memory, attention & hand-eye co-ordination

Connect with online courses or language classes from our library service:
www.librariesireland.ie/join-your-library or Telephone: 091 509094 / 509388

Switch off technology



Take time to switch off technology and find a way to relax and provide self-care – take a bath, go for a walk, read a book, write in a reflective journal, pick up a hobby – whatever it is, take some time out for you.

Get a good night's sleep



Sleep is essential for our brain health to remove toxins from the brain and to help us store our memories. When we sleep well, we are more alert and focused.

- The perfect amount of sleep needed is different for everyone, but it is recommended that adults get 6-9 hours sleep.
- Close the curtains! Sleeping in a dark room supports the body to produce melatonin, which is an important hormone to help us sleep.
- Turn off the TV before bed. The blue light from screens can impact our Circadian rhythm and make it harder to fall asleep.

EAT WELL

"Eating healthily, combined with regular physical activity, can help a person live a full and active life, preserving independence into older age."

Tips for maintaining good eating habits during COVID-19



Maintain a regular meal pattern & plan ahead

This can provide structure to your day and can help to create awareness around how much and what you are eating. Plan your meals by buying a variety of different foods rather than choosing the same meals each day and you'll be looking forward to mealtimes!



Balance food intake according to physical activity

If you are less active, keep an eye on your portion size and add more vegetables, salad or fruit, rather than starchy/carbohydrate foods.



Keep your bones and muscles healthy

Protein foods keeps your muscles and immune system strong – good examples are lean meat, poultry and fish, as well as beans, eggs and nuts. Dairy foods will keep your bones healthy – good examples are milk, yogurt or cheese and look out for those with added Vitamin D which are even better!



Keep up your fruit and vegetables intake

Aim for 5 servings of fruit & vegetables each day which are packed with important nutrients to help you stay healthy. Remember these can be fresh, frozen, tinned or dried and try a mix of colours for variety and a range of fibre, vitamins and minerals.

If you want access to fresh home-delivered meals, here is a listing of some of the Meals on Wheels services throughout Galway City & County



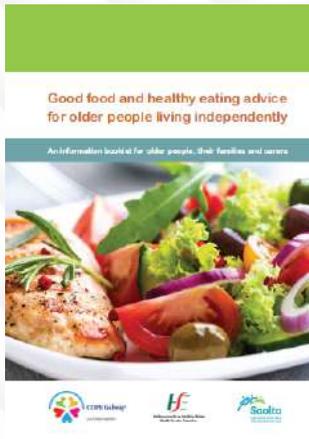
Organisation Name	Areas Served	Contact
Ballinasloe Meals on Wheels	Ballinasloe, Cappataggle, Kilconnell, Ahascragh, Lawrencetown	Kay at 087 232 5163
Ballygar/ Toghergar/ Newbridge Meals on Wheels	Ballygar, Toghergar, Newbridge	Dominica at 087 637 7057
Cairdeas, Forbairt Chonamara Láir Teo	Caiseal, Carna & Cill Chiaráin	Máirín at 087 329 4478 or Eileen at 087 972 2419
Forum Connemara CLG	North West Connemara	Geraldine at 095 41116 or 087 963 3253
Cope Galway	Galway City and County, Aran Islands	091 700 800
Muintearas Teo.	Bealadangan to Lettermullan	091 519532
North Galway Community Meals on Wheels	Ballyglass, Milltown, Kilconly and Kilbannon areas	Matilda at 087 978 3524
Oughterard Meals on Wheels	Oughterard	Mary at 087 41 01 805
Solas Family Resource Centre	Headford, Clann, Caherlistrane, Kilcoona, Shrile, Glencorrib	John or Maura at 093 36446
Tearmann Éanna	South Connemara	Siobhan at 091 505540
Meals4Health	Galway City & County, Aran Islands (meals can be personalised to suit dietary requirements, e.g. swallowing difficulties, diabetes, heart disease, etc.)	091 354 000 or 085 871 9384 info@meals4health.ie www.meals4health.ie



Losing weight as you get older is not always good for you. It is a good idea to be the best weight you can possibly be because:

- You are less likely to fall if you have some muscle.
- If you fall, healthy body fat may help protect you from injury.

If you find your appetite is lower than normal and/or you are unintentionally losing weight, try eating small, nourishing snacks frequently.



◀ **COPE Galway's booklet - "Good food and healthy eating advice for older people living independently"**

For more information on how healthy eating can support positive brain function, please visit:

www.teamsherzai.com



www.brain.foodrevolution.org



How food can impact on our brain and functional performance:



Drink plenty of water! Our brain is the most sensitive organ to dehydration which can trigger cognitive symptoms such as memory loss



"1 in 4 people aged 70 in Ireland are likely to be Vitamin D deficient"

Eating a portion of green vegetables daily can help slow down the process brain aging and cognitive decline



Vitamin D is important for helping our nerves and muscles to work properly and in maintaining a healthy immune system.

Examples of food that contain Vitamin D include eggs, salmon, mackerel and mushrooms. People with low vitamin D levels are more susceptible to viral respiratory infections and that regular supplementation reduces the risk.

The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (Tilda) report says that **"maintaining a sufficient vitamin D status may therefore be of benefit in the Covid-19 pandemic. "If vitamin D status is sufficient, it could benefit vulnerable adults in particular those 70+ years and older who are 'cocooning' during the Covid-19 outbreak".**

Vitamin D overdosing is harmful – please contact your local pharmacist or GP about your options on taking Vitamin D supplements.

Vitamin D advice from Edel Mannion, Registered Advanced Nurse Practitioner, Older Persons GUH

MIND YOUR MOOD

"There is no health,
without Mental Health"



Advice from Frances Weir

*Senior Occupational Therapist -
HSE Later Life Psychiatry Team, Galway*

Benefits of Minding your Mood

Human beings have the amazing ability to think about future events. 'Thinking ahead' means that we can anticipate obstacles or problems. This gives us the opportunity to plan solutions.

Thinking ahead can be helpful in achieving our goals, for example: hand washing, wearing our mask in public spaces and social distancing are helpful things that we can decide to do in order to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus. However, worrying is a way of 'thinking ahead' that often leaves us feeling anxious or apprehensive.

The feelings generated from this unhelpful thinking style can create a chain of thoughts and images that can bring our minds and thoughts to often unlikely scenes or scenarios.

What should you do if you are having a bad day?

Our message to keep your daily routine, stay active, mind your mood, switch off & stay connected are all really great strategies to keep well during this difficult time.

However, there may be days when doing all of these things just isn't enough and they alone may not work for you. We will all experience those days, and that's ok! The important thing is that we recognise the need for self-care and self-compassion and developing your own techniques and strategies that work best for you on days like these.

If, however, you find that day after day these feelings are still overwhelming, interfering with your appetite, sleep, mood or energy, then maybe it's time to get some professional support and talk to your GP.

What types of self-care strategies may help?

For many people, what is familiar is often the most comforting and soothing at these times. Self-care comes in different forms, and what works for you may not work for your friend or neighbour.

For some, self-care will look like writing a diary, reading the local paper, watching the football match on TV, or getting outside in nature & breathing in the lovely fresh air. For all of these activities we need to be present. We may become more aware of the moment we are in, who is there, how we feel and the types of thoughts that we are experiencing.

Mindfulness and meditation techniques have been found to be really successful at building and maintaining our emotional resilience and coping skills, especially if we practice on a regular basis.

What is mindfulness practice?



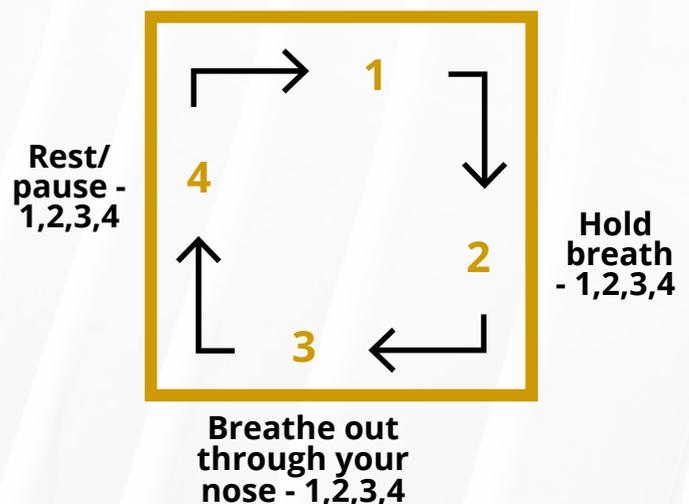
Mindfulness is about being aware of ourselves now, in the present moment. Not dwelling on the past or fretting about the future, but bringing our attention and focus to the here and now.

We can practice mindfulness for very short periods of time. Just two minutes of mindful practice can calm our brains, especially the part of our brain that feels stress, and it can activate the part of our brain that feels peace.

Follow this mindfulness exercise to get started:

1. Set your timer for 3, 5, 10 or 30 minutes.
2. **Sit comfortably in a chair, feet flat on the floor.**
3. Gently close your eyes or softly focus on a point in front of you
4. **Begin to notice your breathing, the movement of air moving through your nostrils.**
5. If your mind wanders off and you find yourself thinking of other things, gently bring your attention back to your breath.

START HERE
Breathe in
through your
nose - 1,2,3,4



Repeat step 1-4. Do this as often as you want but at least 4 times per go.

**If you find you need further support, please contact one of the helplines on the back page of this booklet.
Please contact the Galway Community Call Helpline for local supports.**

Galway COVID-19 Community Call Helpline



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Galway County

1800 928 894 (freephone)

Email: covidsupport@galwaycoco.ie



Galway City

1800 400 150 (freephone)

Our Helpline is here to link you in with our partners in the Community Call if you need:

- Collection & delivery of groceries, prescriptions or other essential household items
- Delivery of Meals
- Assistance with other medical or health needs

We know these are difficult and anxious times, so please also give us a call if you need:

- Someone to talk to or other social supports
- Access to our range of online library services
- Library Books/Services delivered to your home

Our Helpline will be open 9am to 5pm every day including Saturday and Sunday. Outside of these times, please leave us a voicemail for a callback the next morning.

Useful contact numbers

It is important to realise that we are here to help you through this time.

If you have any concerns for your health please contact your GP or one of the numbers below.



HSE infoline - 1850 24 1850

Provides information about health services, entitlements and how to access HSE health and social services in your area.

Senior Helpline - LoCall: 1850 440 444

The Senior Helpline provides opportunities for older people to talk to someone of their own age group for the price of a local call from anywhere in Ireland. Callers can talk to one of the older volunteers and all calls are taken in the strictest of confidence.

ALONE - 0818 222 024

The helpline, which is running in collaboration with the Department of Health and the HSE, is available to all older people

Text "HELLO" to 50808 for a calming chat & support

This text line is a HSE funded service for those going through a mental health or emotional crisis.

Social Welfare Services, Department of Social Protection

**Email: state.con@welfare.ie
(071) 915 7100 or 1890 500 000**

The Department is available to provide advice and support on income/pension services.

Generation Tech Helpline - Free Phone - 01 96 33 2 88

www.generationtech.ie

Generation Tech volunteers give free over-the-phone help to older adults with IT or Technical issues. Open Monday-Friday 8am - 8pm

www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/olderpeople

Here you will find services for older adults in Ireland including home support and community services, benefits and financial entitlements and helpful safety and protection advice.

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Emergency services - Dial 112 or 999

www.hse.ie