



## Tips for home-care with Covid

Welcome to PhysioBiz, with healthcare advice and information you can trust and rely on, brought to you by the South African Physiotherapy Society!

“If you fall ill with Covid, you will likely need to look after yourself at home,” says Rogier van Bever Donker, President of the South African Society of Physiotherapy. “Most people do not need to be hospitalised; and with hospital facilities under pressure in some parts of the country, people who are not severely ill are encouraged to care for themselves at home.”

What do you need to know about self-care?

- **Eat and drink**

It's so simple, but crucial: your body needs food and water for the immune system to work. Physiotherapists on home calls have found many people who haven't eaten or aren't drinking enough, which affects their immune system's ability to do its job. If you have limited energy, save it for cooking an egg or even two-minute noodles; don't waste it on having a shower, changing the sheets or wiping the kitchen surfaces. Keep something to drink on your bedside table and makes sure you're well hydrated!

- **Be prepared**

If you've just had a positive test, chances are you will have a few days of feeling really bad in the coming week (for most people, it will be just a few days; but bear in mind that for some, it will last longer). Prepare with that in mind: make sure your bedroom is ventilated, that you have things handy that you might need (including books, e-readers or tablets). Do you have animals? Get a feeder that will dispense food and fill it; put out several bowls of water (physios on home visits say one thing that causes anxiety is when patients don't have enough energy to feed their pets for a few days).

- **Invest in an oximeter**

The little devices that measure your oxygen levels are essential. You can order one from your local pharmacy. The oximeter shows the oxygen saturation ('sats') in your blood, as well as your pulse rate. Check what your sats should be with your doctor (if you have certain conditions like Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease or COPD, your normal sats might be a bit lower). For most people, dropping below 95 is a concern. Monitor your oxygen for 14 days.

- **Symptoms of concern**

Call your healthcare provider if you have difficulty breathing, chest pain, if you cannot move or are extremely fatigued, or if your symptoms worsen or do not improve.

- **Keep in touch**

Keep your phone charged and close at hand. Stay in touch with a friend, a relative, a colleague; make an agreement that you will call or WhatsApp every day, so that someone is aware if things get bad or you need help.

- **Do breathing exercises**

“The more you can strengthen your diaphragm and improve your breathing, the better you will fare,” says van Bever Donker. Ask your physiotherapist for information about simple breathing exercises that will help you breathe better.

To find a physiotherapist, visit [www.saphysio.co.za](http://www.saphysio.co.za).