



ISOLATION

ACTIVITY PACK

**Resources for young people
with cancer needing to isolate**



ISOLATION:

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Being in isolation and missing your normal routine, spending time outdoors and seeing people you care about is really tough.

If you're going through cancer treatment, self-isolation may well be something you've had to deal with long before anyone heard the words coronavirus or lockdown for the first time.

And while more people will understand how tough it is now, that might not always help with the day to day struggle.

That's why we've made this activity pack - to give you some ideas of how to build a routine, how to spend this time positively, but also how to give yourself a break and look after yourself.

After all, it doesn't matter if you write a novel or just take one day at a time and get through it. Self-isolating when you might also feel rubbish from treatment is hard, so try to be kind to yourself.

And remember, you're not alone. If you're struggling, make sure to reach out to your GP or clinical care team, your nurse or Youth Support Coordinator, or friends and family.



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BUILDING YOUR ROUTINE

No matter how appealing a lie in and not having any reason to go to bed might be to start with, one of the things which makes isolating really hard is losing your usual routine.

Getting up and going to school, uni or work, seeing friends, exercising on certain days, cooking food with the family – whatever a normal week looks like for you, isolation can make it harder to separate one day from another.

You can use this diary template each week to plan your time, filling out something from this guide for each day. You might find it helpful to take something from a different section so you're mixing up your activities a bit.

So it can really help to set yourself a routine for every week. Don't worry, it doesn't have to be super strict or rigid. Just an idea of something you'd like to do on each day.

Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

KEEPING YOUR BODY MOVING

Exercising at home can be a great way of building it into your everyday life. But if you're feeling fatigued from treatment, or sick from chemo, exercising might be the last thing on your mind.

Keeping moving can really help you feel more energised, sleep better and feel better mentally too. And it doesn't have to mean a full-on Joe Wicks every single day (although that's great if you feel like it). It's about listening to your body and finding something that works for you.

We've included different ways to keep active, with exercises for a mix of fitness levels and intensities.

And you never know – by trying out something new you might find something you want to keep up after isolation too.

Five-minute fitness workouts for beginners

Eddy Clarkson is a qualified personal trainer and Teenage Cancer Trust supporter. He's also been through cancer himself and was treated on our unit in Leeds when he was diagnosed with leukaemia aged 20. He shared these [five-minute workouts](#) perfect for beginners, to help you up your fitness levels and feel healthy.

Three 10-minute workouts to do at home

Our friends at MOVE Charity are experts in exercise and cancer rehab. They kindly shared these brilliant [10-minute workouts](#) you can do at home with little or no equipment.

Yoga for beginners

Learn about the mental and physical wellbeing benefits of yoga for young people going through cancer [in this guest blog](#) from yoga teachers Anna and Kat, and follow along with a relaxing 30-minute yoga session for beginners.

And if yoga takes your fancy, there's loads of free YouTube practices available too, as well as paid-for apps you can try out.

Joe Wicks

Joe Wicks runs a YouTube channel, [The Body Coach TV](#), with hundreds of free workouts for different levels and abilities.

NHS Get active your way

This free [NHS resource](#) has lots of ideas for exercise for different goals, like stretching, building strength or for sport.

This Girl Can activity finder

[This Girl Can](#) believe there's no 'right' way to get active. That's why they've created an [activity finder](#) to help you find something that meets your needs, that you enjoy, and will help you stay active, in whatever way works for you. (Oh, and it's not just for girls! All genders can use these resources).

10 morning stretches

You might have found ways to exercise at home, but it can be easy to forget to stretch too. That's especially important when you're moving around a bit less than usual. Bupa shared these simple [stretches](#) you can do first thing in the morning to get your body feeling more flexible throughout the day.

Walking is still exercise!

If you're able to leave your house, going for a walk is a free and low-impact way of keeping moving. You can pick a longer or shorter route depending on how you feel that day, and can up the pace if you're feeling a bit more energetic.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR

WELLBEING & MENTAL HEALTH

How you're feeling mentally is just as important as (and closely linked to) how you're feeling physically.

So as well as finding time to keep active, it's important to set aside time for supporting your wellbeing and mental health.

That might not feel too familiar to you right now, as maybe your normal routine is what keeps you feeling mentally well. But isolation is a good time to learn more about coping strategies for when things are tough, as well as putting them in place to get you through spending lots of time alone and inside.

Don't worry if some of these things don't feel natural for you to start with. They're called practices for a reason – they need repeating regularly to get the hang of how to make them work for you.

And remember – if you're ever struggling with your mental health, you're not alone and there is support for you. Have a chat with your clinical care team, nurse or Youth Support Coordinator, or friends and family to make sure you get the right help.

How positive thinking can help start your day right

Psychologist Martin Burder explains the negativity bias and how to overcome it, sharing his [top tips](#) on positive thinking to help you start your day in the best possible way.

Breathing exercises to help you relax and manage anxiety

Complementary therapist Helen shared some [breathing exercises](#) to help you relax if you're feeling anxious. Listen along and give them a try!

Mental wellbeing, anxiety and isolation: young people's top tips

Kirsty, Aggie, Ammarah, Nat and Abi from our amazing Youth Advisory Group – made up of young people who've been through cancer – share their [top tips](#) on protecting your mental wellbeing and coping with anxiety and isolation.

Practicing mindfulness to help manage anxiety

Merry Gibbons, a Macmillan teenage and young adult wellbeing specialist and psychotherapist, tells us [how mindfulness can help us](#) manage difficult or unpleasant thoughts and feelings, and shares some exercises to help you feel more in control.

Managing worry and living with uncertainty

Clinical Psychologists Dr Laura Baker, Dr Louise Brown and Dr Bec Mulholland share some [information and tips](#) to help you manage worry and anxiety during cancer.

How to sleep better

Sleep is so important, but cancer can make it really difficult to get enough rest. Professor Jason Ellis explains what the sleep cycle is and how understanding it can help manage your fatigue, and [shares tips](#) on clearing your mind before bed, and how to sleep better.

Young Minds

[Young Minds](#) exist to support young people with their mental health, and they have a loads of articles and tips on things like how to stay grounded when feeling anxious, how to have a digital detox, and believing in yourself.

Mind

[Mind](#) have lots of information about looking after your mental health, including advice on different mental health conditions, how to get help and who to talk to.

NUTRITION AND FOOD

TO MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD

We all know that food is fuel. But eating a varied and healthy diet isn't easy when you're feeling fatigued, or sick because of cancer treatment.

Food you used to love might now turn your stomach, and you might not feel able to eat big meals like usual.

And on top of that chemo can change how food tastes and sometimes give you a metallic taste in your mouth.

Basically, food can stop being fun very quickly when you're going through cancer treatment. So try to be kind to yourself if you're not managing to get your five-a-day every day, or you're eating cereal for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The important thing is to eat what you can when you can, and to talk to your clinical care team for help if you're struggling.

We've compiled some ideas for trying to get some nutrients into your diet when eating is harder than usual, as well as some great places for recipes if you're wanting to try something new in isolation.



Nutrition and cancer: eating a healthy and balanced diet

Monika Siemicka is a specialist dietitian who's worked with teenagers and young adults with cancer for the past eight years. She shared her [expert advice on nutrition](#) for young people with cancer and her top tips to help you eat a healthy, varied diet.

What I learned about nutrition and cancer during chemo and radiotherapy

Lisa, who was supported through cancer treatment by our team in Edinburgh and is also a qualified nutritionist, explains how her eating was affected during chemo and radiotherapy, and shares some top [nutrition advice](#) for other young people.

Pineapple tacos: a great recipe to help with taste changes during chemo

Chef Ryan Riley shows you how to make [pineapple tacos](#): a quick and easy recipe that's especially good if you're struggling with taste changes as a side effect of cancer treatment.

BBC Good Food

[BBC Good Food](#) is a free online recipe resource with loads of options for whatever you might fancy. You can filter by different diet types, like vegetarian or gluten free. And they have collections for different foods and drinks. Why not try out their [smoothie collection](#)? It can be a good way of getting some fruit, veg, dairy, or oats into your diet if you're struggling to eat them whole.

Cooking on a Bootstrap

It can be hard to make healthy recipes if you're struggling to balance your budget. [Cooking on a Bootstrap](#) is the #1 budget recipe website from food writer and author Jack Monroe. There are loads of ideas to try, and lots of them are veggie and vegan friendly too.

Life Kitchen

[Life Kitchen](#) is a non-profit cookery school for anyone affected by taste changes brought about by cancer or cancer treatment. Started by Ryan and Kim after losing parents to cancer, they run classes and write recipe books to help people enjoy food again.

LEARNING, TRYING SOMETHING NEW AND SETTING GOALS

Isolation can turn your normal routine on its head, especially when it comes to going to school, college or uni.

You might be able to do some learning online while you're isolating, or maybe a friend can keep you in the loop with what you're covering in classes.

If you're worried about keeping up, always make sure to talk to your teachers or tutors – they'll want to do what they can to help you carry on as much as possible. And you can also talk to your clinical care team and Youth Support Coordinator too, who can help you manage your learning.

And isolation can also be a great time to learn new skills, expand your understanding, set some goals and try something you've always wanted to try.

Have a look at our resources to help you.



Cancer, school work and coronavirus: 10 tips from a teacher

English teacher and Teenage Cancer Trust volunteer Bethan has shared some brilliant **tips to help** you keep learning and keep up with school work. While she talks about coronavirus, it's relevant to having to isolate for any reason during cancer treatment.

Setting yourself new goals after cancer

Life coach Steph Davies covers how to set **achievable, meaningful goals** to get you where you want to be.

“It's always good to set realistic goals”

Terence was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia when he was 16. At our Find Your Sense of Tumour event in 2019, he gave a brilliant **speech** with the message that life goes on after cancer.

Pick up your pen: writing for self-expression and wellbeing

Writing can be a great way to express yourself and make sense of your experiences, especially if you've been through something like cancer. Professional storyteller Jude shares some **tips to help** you get the words flowing.

30 fun drawing prompts and art collaboration ideas

Want to get creative but not sure what to draw or where to start? Try our **30-day drawing challenge** and get tips and ideas for creating art with other people!

The Social Sketchup: drawing for mindfulness and wellbeing

The Social Sketchup is a series of daily sketching challenges designed to calm your mind, boost your mood and get your creativity flowing.

Bullet journal ideas

If you've never tried bullet journaling before, now might be a great time to start! Check out our **bullet journal ideas**, tips and templates to help you get started.

Try some podcasts

If you've never got into podcasts before, now might be the time to find your new favourite series. There are so many available, there's something for everyone – from sports commentary, theatre reviews, activism or just silly chats amongst friends.

You might want to start with **AfterThoughts** - a series that shares the stories of young people diagnosed with cancer. The first series with Trekstock focusses on those aged 20-30, and the second series which we collaborated on with hosts Toby and Alice, focusses on those in their teen years.

Start a film club

Got a list of films you've not got around to watching? Why not set up a film club with others on the unit or friends and family at home? Every Friday night, you could agree the film you're going to watch based on a different theme each week, like sci-fi, rom-com, classic, thriller, or even a film from the year you were born.

Listen to audio books

If reading is proving hard right now because of fatigue, you might find listening to audio books easier. There are loads of different providers, and many offer free trials if you want to give it a go before spending any dosh.

Black History Month resources

Any time is a good time to expand our understanding of history and the way it's been told. For Black History Month 2020, we shared a **selection of the best films**, documentaries, books and podcasts to check out.

Get crafty

Learning how things are made and taking the time to create something from scratch can really help focus your mind on something, as well as giving you new skills. And there's no end to what you can make with the right materials – cushion covers, fancy hats, model aircraft, painted plant pots. You name it, the internet will show you how. (Remember to check the safety instructions of anything you're making before you get started. There might be some things you can't make if you're still on the unit).

LGBT+ history month resources

For LGBT+ History month 2021, we shared a **selection of the best** TV, films, documentaries, books and accounts to follow and learn about the amazing history of this community.

Find online courses

School and college often focus us on learning about what we want to do in our future. But sometimes it's great to learn things just because we find it interesting! Using this time to find online courses can be a great way to break up your days. Maybe you want to give a new language a try, or take a short course in cartoon drawing. Whatever you're curious about, there are lots of free courses online.

Disability awareness

There are 13.9 million disabled people in the UK. Disabilities can be invisible. For example, in law, cancer patients are classed as being disabled. It might not always feel that way to you, but it helps protect and support you when it comes to things like education and work.

The charity **Scope** have lots of information and support for people living with disability, including their **social model of disability**, developed by people with disabilities.

Refreshing your skills

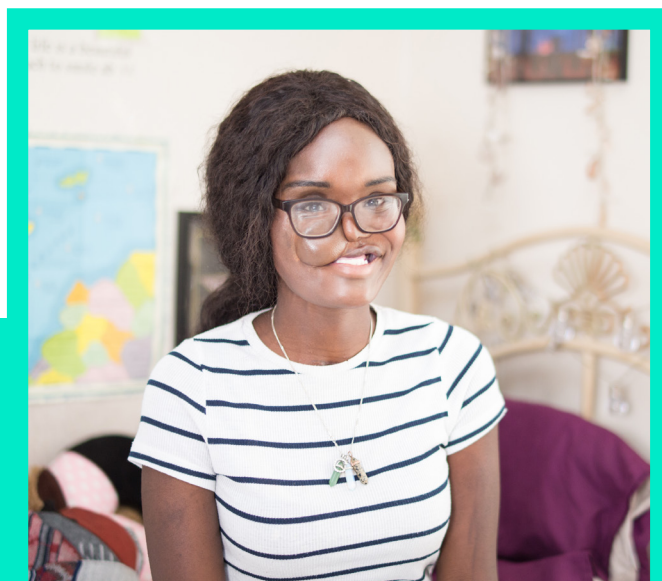
Using a little bit of time to get things like your money or CV in order is the type of thing you might be really glad of later. The Prince's Trust have loads of **free online resources** to help you get started.

CREATING A POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

Hair loss, weight changes, scarring – you might be facing these worries about your body at a time when you’re still figuring out who you are and how you want the world to see you.

We’re here to support you while your relationship with your body changes. We want you to feel able to look in the mirror and say: ‘How I’m feeling is ok. I’m not alone. And I’m still me.’

So here are some resources from our **#StillMe** campaign.



How cancer can affect your body image

Cancer can really change your image. And when you’re young, that’s tough to deal with. Read more about how cancer can affect your **body image**.

Tips on cancer and body image

It’s hard not to be affected if cancer or treatment changes the way you look. The way we feel about ourselves can be closely linked to our appearance. So if you do look different, you might feel less confident, or more self-conscious, or shy, or just angry that your body doesn’t work or look like it used to. Read **some tips** for how to manage this.

Hair and beauty advice for young people with cancer

Tangle Teezer and Kohl Kreatives gave expert hair and beauty **advice to young people** to help deal with changes to the body during cancer.

“I was so self-conscious of my leg and I couldn’t bear to look at it.”

Andrew was 24 when he was diagnosed with leiomyosarcoma, a type of soft tissue cancer. He had to have surgery to remove a tumour from his lower right leg, which left a large scar. Andrew received support from us at our unit at the Beatson West of Scotland Cancer Centre during his treatment. Read Andrew’s **story here**.

“I thought that I’d lost my identity when my whole face changed.”

Crystal was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, a type of bone cancer, aged 18. She had to have surgery to remove a tumour from her cheekbone, followed by further operations to rebuild her face. She was treated on the Teenage Cancer Trust unit at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham. Read Crystal’s **story here**.

“I don’t identify myself as a person with a disease.”

Holly was diagnosed with breast cancer in February 2019. She underwent chemotherapy, which caused her hair to fall out. Holly was treated at the Bristol Oncology Centre, with support from her Teenage Cancer Trust nurse. Read Holly’s **story here**.