

COVID Review Protocol - questions you could use to assess the patient's breathing and health

There will be patients who have been assessed as being able to stay at home but need regular, clinician initiated review. This may form a significant part of GP workload in coming weeks.

Try to get a picture of what's going on in the home so you can judge what they're doing now compared to their normal activities.

Allow them to tell their story. Acknowledge their anxiety, that you understand as everyone is feeling anxious and worried at the moment.

Who's at home with you?

Are you the carer for someone?

Are you managing to do the care for him/her as you usually would?

Explain you're going to ask a few questions to check how serious their illness is:

Have you struggled with any activities today?

How is your breathing today?

Are you so breathless that you can't speak more than a few words?

When you're sitting down doing nothing is your breathing harder or faster than it is normally?

And how is that compared to yesterday?

What affects your breathing now that didn't yesterday?

Has your breathing stopped you having a wash or getting dressed today?

Has it stopped you preparing breakfast or lunch today?

Has your breathing stopped you doing anything else that I've not asked you about?

Have you or anyone else noticed your breathing is noisy or that you are wheezing at all?

Have you or anyone else noticed your lips turning blue?

Focus on change. A clear story of deterioration is more important than whether the patient currently feels short of breath. Ask if there's someone else there with them you can speak to and ask some of the same questions.

Plan for the patient – It is often very helpful to talk through your plan with a colleague.

Decide if you will contact the patient proactively or let them call you if there's a problem.

Patients who live alone will need proactive follow up.

Ask them to keep their phone charged and near them at all times.

Arrange a review with you if at all possible.

Set the review interval with your clinical judgement (eg same day, next day, 1-3d).

Be especially concerned around day 7-9 of their illness as some people deteriorate quickly at that time.

The patient may need passing to the covid assessment team or may need an ambulance transfer to hospital.

Ask them if they can take their own pulse.

See <https://youtu.be/omiRvwlv8io?t=285>

You may be able to check their respiratory rate via video.

Ask them if they can take their own temperature.

Ask them if they can take their own blood pressure.