



Coronavirus
COVID-19
Public Health
Advice

Keeping well this winter



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

About this booklet

The next few months will be hard, for all of us, as we live with the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) on our lives. **But there are ways we can make it a little better for ourselves.**

This season, make a plan to help and care for yourself. Keeping active, getting outside and staying connected with other people can make a positive difference.

Some days, some weeks will be harder than others. This is especially true at times when we are living with restrictions, have to limit our social interactions and need to keep two metres social distancing even with friends. Or if we have to self-isolate because of symptoms or a diagnosis of COVID-19.

This booklet contains health information that you will find useful.

The centre pages also contain space for you to note local phone numbers and contacts that you can use when you need to.



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Minding your health

Looking after your physical and mental health is more important than ever now. Healthy eating and getting regular exercise are vital for health.

Eating well

Eating a variety of nourishing foods provides the energy (calories) and nutrients that you need to stay healthy. Hot meals and drinks help to keep you warm, so have regular hot drinks and eat at least one hot meal a day if possible. Eating regularly helps keep energy levels up during winter.

These tips will help you have healthy eating habits throughout the coming months.

- Plan your meals in advance. This will help you to introduce variety and eat more nutritious foods.
 - Prepare your meals using mostly fresh ingredients. Choose foods like fruits, salads and vegetables for snacks. Frozen vegetables and fruits like berries are a great option for having in the freezer.
 - Different foods have different nutrients so if possible try to have a variety of meals throughout the week. When you are buying fruit and vegetables, try to include a range of colours (think of a rainbow) as the different coloured options have different vitamins.
 - Use healthier cooking methods such as grilling or baking, rather than frying or roasting with oil or fat.
 - Choose wholemeal and wholegrain breads, cereals, pasta and brown rice where possible.
 - Include a small amount of lean protein foods such as poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, beans or meat at two meals in the day. For older people, protein foods are important at all meals to help keep muscles strong.
 - Try to eat five to seven portions of fruit, vegetables and salad each day. At mealtimes, aim for half of your plate to be vegetables or salad.
 - Make mealtimes special, whether you are eating on your own or with others. Enjoy your meals at a table and focus on your food rather than watching TV or scrolling on your phone.
 - Avoid having foods that are high in calories, sugar and fat every day. They contain very little nutrition and can be very high in calories.
- Visit hse.ie/healthyeatingguidelines for more info on healthy eating. For easy to prepare, tasty and nutritious recipes, search online for 'SafeFood 101 Square Meals cookbook'.



Unplanned weight loss

If you or someone you know is experiencing unplanned weight loss that might be related to illness, social isolation or reduced appetite, it is important to tell your GP or public health nurse. They can recommend some dietary resources that can help, such as a high-energy high-protein cookbook called Making the Most of Every Bite.

The cookbook and other resources are available on hse.ie/nutritionsupports but make sure you seek advice from your GP, nurse or dietitian first.

Unplanned weight gain

Changes in everyday routines, like working from home, stress, physical activity, sleep and eating can affect your weight. Visit hse.ie/healthyeatingguidelines for information on portion sizes and meal ideas, or talk to your GP or healthcare professional.

Exercise and physical activity

Getting some exercise every day, ideally outdoors, is important for both physical and mental health.

If you are an older adult or if you have an underlying health condition or a disability, exercise and activity may feel harder to do. But they are really important for things like muscle strength and bone health, which can help to maintain strength, flexibility and prevent falls.



How much exercise do I need?

Children and young people aged 2 to 18 should be active, at a moderate to vigorous level, for at least **60 minutes every day**.



Moderate activity means your heart is beating faster than normal and breathing is harder than normal. Vigorous activity means your heart is beating much faster than normal and breathing is much harder than normal.

Every adult should be active at a moderate level at least **30 minutes a day 5 days a week**. Moderate activity means your breathing and heart rate increase, but you are still able to carry on a conversation. You should feel warm or be sweating slightly at a comfortable pace.



Many adults and children who have a disability will also find some exercise enjoyable and helpful for overall physical and mental health. If you have a disability aim to be as active as the disability allows in order to meet the guideline for your age group. If you are supporting someone who has a disability, you can check in with their healthcare provider for ideas on what type of activity or exercise is most suitable and safe.



Children's activity should also include muscle-strengthening, flexibility and bone-strengthening exercises three times a week. Adults also need to include activities which increase muscular strength and endurance on two to three days per week.



These tips will help you to enjoy being more active this winter.

- Make a plan to include exercise in your daily routine. Think about a 20 or 30-minute walk each day and also include some other physical activity, such as an online exercise class or sport, two to three times a week if you can.
- Household activities like vacuuming, washing windows, and reorganising cupboards all add up to daily physical activity.
- Plan for how you can exercise even when the weather is wet or windy outside. Can you invest in waterproof clothing and shoes so that you can still go outdoors? Ask friends or family members for recommendations that you can do indoors on those days when you don't feel like going outside.
- If you are finding it hard to get into a routine of regular exercise, try to arrange meeting up with a friend or family member, this can help to encourage you.

The HSE website features a range of indoor exercises suitable for older people. Search online for 'HSE indoor exercises'. Or ask a family member, friend or practice nurse if they can print these for you.

Examples of muscle-strengthening exercises

Sit-ups, squats, push ups, lunges, carrying shopping, pushing a lawn mower or lifting hand weights.

Examples of bone-strengthening exercises

All weight bearing activity like running, jogging, jumping or skipping.

Minding your mental health

Lots of us are finding all of the changes to our lives as a result of COVID-19 upsetting and difficult to deal with. Here are some tips to help you mind your mental health during this time.

Daily routine

Having a healthy daily routine is really important for mental health. During difficult times like this, it's best if you can keep some structure in your day. This means eating well, physical activity and exercise, regular sleep habits, and things that you like or enjoy, such as reading a book or being creative.

Stay connected

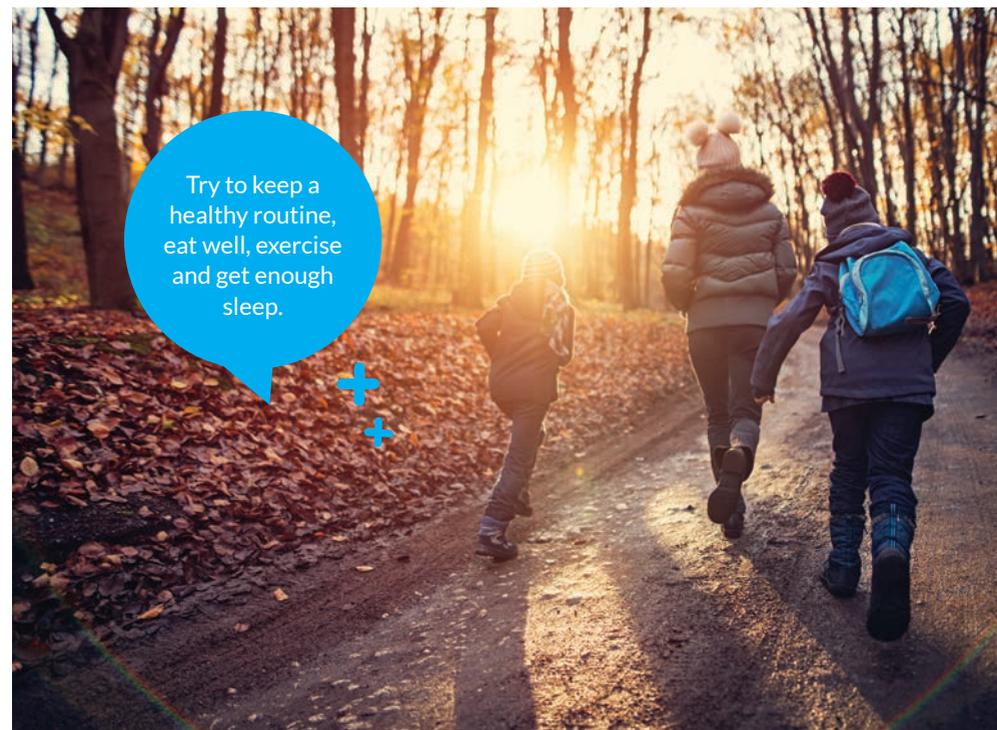
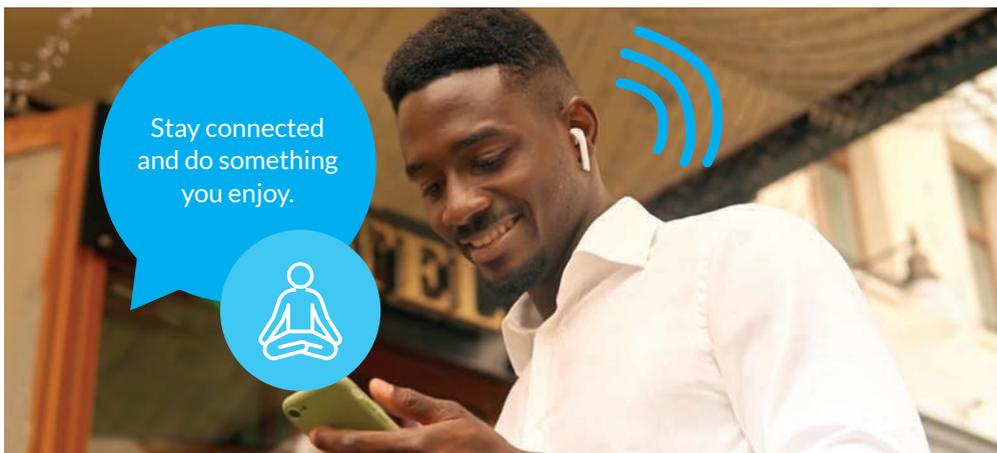
Stay connected with other people in ways that are safe for you. If you are not able to meet family or friends because of restrictions, stay in regular contact by phone, letter or email.

Try to listen only to the facts

Keep a realistic perspective of the situation based on facts. Stay informed but set times and limits for news. If you find yourself becoming overwhelmed by the news, try to talk about it with someone.

Be mindful

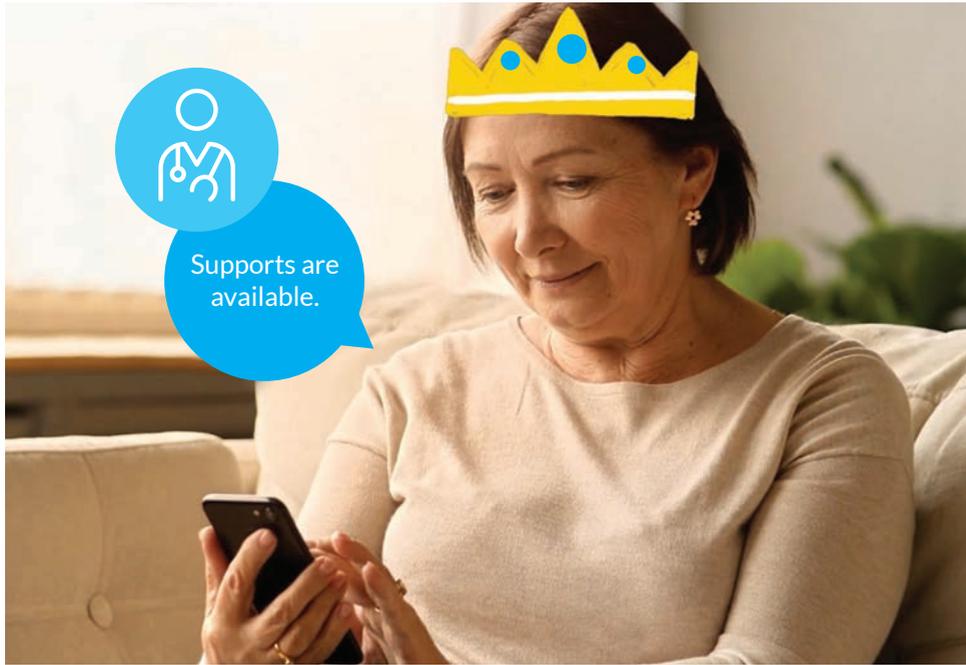
If you smoke or drink, try to avoid doing this more than usual. Both can affect your mood and overall health and won't help you in the long-term. *If you would like help to stop smoking, Freephone 1800 201 203 or visit quit.ie*



Changes that you may have noticed

Over the last few months you may have noticed some of the following changes or difficulties for you or someone you care about:

- increased anxiety
- feeling stressed
- finding yourself excessively checking for symptoms, in yourself, or others
- becoming irritable more easily
- feeling insecure or unsettled
- fearing that normal aches and pains might be the virus
- having trouble sleeping
- feeling helpless or a lack of control
- having irrational thoughts



If you need support

- **GPs** are available and can help if you are experiencing mental health problems. You can phone to make an appointment and they can arrange a phone or video consultation if that suits you better.
- **Mental health helplines**, including the Samaritans, can be a support through crisis or distress. **You can call the Samaritans on 116 123 and calls are free from landline phone or mobile.**
- **Text support services** are also an option. You can text HELLO to 50808 for a calming chat and immediate support if you are going through a mental health or emotional crisis. This is a HSE funded service.

For more information on mental health and services, please visit the HSE website yourmentalhealth.ie or call the Your Mental Health Information Line on 1800 111 888.

Suicidal thoughts and feelings can sometimes be part of a mental health crisis. Please remember that if you are in crisis or feeling suicidal, or if you know someone who is at immediate risk of harm, you can call the emergency services on 112 or 999 for help.

General health checks and essentials

Flu vaccine

Flu season lasts from October to April. Flu can cause serious illness for some people.

The flu vaccine is available free of charge from GPs and pharmacists for people who are at risk of complications from the flu. This includes adults aged 65 and over, anyone who is pregnant, those with a long-term illness, and for the first time children aged 2 to age 12.

Regular and routine health checks

If you have a long-term health condition like diabetes, epilepsy, or high blood pressure think about any health checks that you might need to have over the coming months. Contact your GP to arrange a suitable and safe consultation time.

If you need to speak with your GP about any other health concern, please don't delay. **GPs, hospitals and other health services are open and ready to take care of you.**

Most GPs now offer phone or video consultations. This means you can talk to your GP without leaving your home. For a phone consultation, you just need to give your phone number to the surgery. For a video consultation, you will need a smartphone or computer with a reliable internet connection and webcam.

Please remember that if you have any symptoms of COVID-19, you should not go to your GP surgery. Phone your GP for advice instead.

Attending healthcare appointments

There may be some health concerns where a phone or video consultation won't be suitable. **In this case, there are a few things to remember:**

1. Arrive at the time of your appointment. If you arrive early, you may be asked to wait in another area or in your car if you travelled that way. This is to help maintain social distancing within the clinic.
2. Wear a face mask and use the hand sanitiser which is available in the clinic.
3. If the clinic has specific 'entry' and 'exit' doors, use these. This will help to reduce the number of people you come into contact with.
4. Go into the clinic on your own, unless you need to have someone with you. A parent or guardian can accompany a child to their appointment.



Antibiotics and other medicines

Antibiotics are medicines used to treat infections caused by bacteria. You may need antibiotics if you have a bacterial infection that is unlikely to go away without them. Antibiotics do not work for viral infections such as COVID-19, colds and flu, and most coughs and sore throats.

Taking antibiotics when we don't need them puts us at risk of harm such as skin rash, diarrhoea and other side effects.

Tell your GP if you are prescribed antibiotics and are taking other medication. Some antibiotics don't mix well with other medicines. Your doctor may not know all the medicines that you are taking as they may have been prescribed by different doctors. Ask your GP or pharmacist if the antibiotic is safe to take with your other medicine.

Prescriptions

If you are on regular medication for a health condition, keep a list of your medicines in a safe place. This is really helpful if you need to go to the doctor or to the pharmacist. There is space in this booklet to keep your list, see page 19, or you can just keep it on a piece of paper at home. If you have a mobile phone, take and keep a photo of your list.

You don't have to go to your GP in order to get a repeat prescription. You can phone and tell them what you need. They can arrange to send the prescription to your local pharmacy for you. You or someone you trust can collect it from there.

Medical cards and GP visit cards

For information about medical cards and other health payment supports, search online for 'HSE schemes and allowances'.

COVID-19 Information

How to prevent the spread



Distance
yourself at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from other people, especially those who might be unwell



Minimise
the number of people in your social network



Wash
your hands well and often to avoid contamination



Cover
your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing and discard used tissue safely



Wear
a face covering at all times when shopping, on public transport, in a healthcare setting and when in close contact with people



Avoid
crowds and crowded places



Don't
shake hands or hug when saying hello or greeting other people



Avoid
touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands



Clean
and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces



Don't
share food or other items such as mugs or glasses



Know
the symptoms. If you have them self isolate and contact your GP immediately



Download
the COVID tracker app

COVID-19

Symptoms and what to do if you're sick

It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to appear.

The most common symptoms are:



Cough

This can be any kind of cough, usually dry but not always



Fever

High temperature over 38 degrees celsius



Shortness of breath



Breathing difficulties



Sudden loss of smell



Sudden loss of taste

You may display one, some or all of these symptoms.

If you develop symptoms, you should self-isolate to protect other people, and phone your GP. See the next pages for information on self-isolating.

Other people you live with will need to restrict their movements (see page 15).

Your GP consultation is free of charge if you have any of these symptoms. Please phone your GP and do not go to your GP surgery, because if you do have the virus you could pass it on to someone else. Your GP will advise over the phone if you need to have a test. If you need a test, it is also free of charge.

Free HSE COVID-19 testing

You will be referred for a free COVID-19 test if you have symptoms and, following a phone consultation, your GP advises that you need a test. If you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for the virus, the HSE public health tracing team might contact you and arrange for you to be tested. Keep your phone close to you and make sure it is switched on.

You will find more detailed information on testing on the HSE website, search for 'HSE COVID testing'. Or you can Freephone HSELive on 1850 24 1850 for information.



Self-isolation

Self-isolation means staying indoors and completely avoiding contact with other people, including the people you live with. If you live with other people, stay on your own in a room with a window that you can open for fresh air, if possible.

You have to self-isolate when there is a high risk that you could spread the virus to other people.

Self-isolate:

- if you have symptoms of COVID-19
- while you wait for a test appointment and your test results, if you have symptoms of COVID-19. If you are being tested as a close contact and you don't have any symptoms, you should restrict your movements instead (see next page)
- if you have had a positive test result for COVID-19, even if you have mild symptoms or no symptoms

People in your household will need to restrict their movements (stay at home) for 14 days. This is because it can take up to two weeks for symptoms of COVID-19 to show.

When you can stop self-isolation:

Most people can stop self-isolating when both of these apply:

- you have had no fever for five days
- it has been ten days since you first developed symptoms

If you tested positive because you are a close contact, you may have no symptoms. In this case, you can stop self-isolating ten days from the date of your test.

If you are caring for someone who cannot self-isolate you should restrict your movements for 17 days.

Restricted movements

Restricting your movements means staying at home to avoid contact with other people. Restricting your movements helps to stop the spread of COVID-19. You can still go outside to exercise by yourself as long as you keep 2 metres away from other people.

Restrict your movements for 14 days if you:

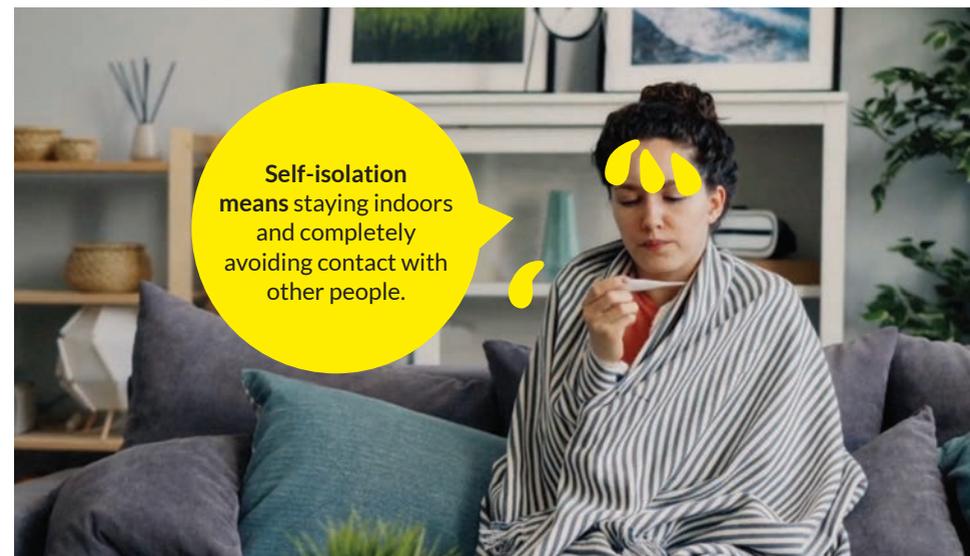
- are a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19
- live with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19 but you feel well
- arrive in Ireland from a country that is not on the green list

If you are caring for someone who cannot self-isolate you should restrict your movements for 17 days.

Restrict your movements if you are a close contact of a person who tested positive for COVID-19. You must restrict your movements for 14 days. Do this from when you were last in contact with that person.

You must do this even if your test comes back negative. This is because it can take up to 14 days for the virus to show up in your system after you have been exposed to it.

For more detailed information, please visit [hse.ie/coronavirus](https://www.hse.ie/coronavirus) or call HSELive on **1850 24 1850**.



COVID-19, colds, flu: What's the difference?

Colds, coughs and flu are common in winter time. Flu season generally lasts from October to April.

This year, we should all make a particular effort to avoid getting coughs, colds and flu. We can help to do this by washing hands, keeping social distance, eating a healthy, nutritious diet, and getting regular exercise.

If you are at risk of serious complications from the flu you can also get the flu vaccine free of charge from your GP or pharmacist. You are at higher risk if you are aged 65 or over, if you have a long-term illness, if you are pregnant, and for children aged 2 to 12 years old.

If someone around you has a cold or flu, try to avoid becoming infected yourself by keeping away from them, and cleaning and disinfecting any shared surfaces or items, such as cutlery. Avoid sharing toothbrushes, food items or drinks with other people in your home.

The actions we take to protect ourselves and others from COVID-19 (hand washing, washing and disinfecting surfaces regularly, cough and sneeze etiquette) will also help to protect us from colds and flu.

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Symptoms

Symptoms	Coronavirus Symptoms range from mild to severe	Cold Gradual onset of symptoms	Flu Abrupt onset of symptoms
 Fever or chills	Common	Rare	Common
 Cough	Common (usually dry)	Mild	Common (usually dry)
 Shortness of breath	Common	No	No
 Lost or changed sense of smell or taste	Common	Rare	Rare
 Aches and pains	Common	Common	Common
 Fatigue	Common	Sometimes	Common
 Sore throat	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
 Headaches	Sometimes	Rare	Common
 Runny or stuffy nose	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
 Feeling sick or vomiting	Rare	No	Sometimes
 Diarrhoea	Rare	No	Sometimes for children
 Sneezing	No	Common	No

Helpful resources

My winter plan

1. Get outside every day, if it is safe to do so and I am well enough.
2. Stick to a regular healthy routine of diet, exercise and sleep. Eat lots of fruit and vegetables.
3. Get a good night's sleep.
4. Connect with at least one family member, friend or neighbour every day, if possible.
5. Have a list of medicines and my Eircode in a very handy place, in case I need them.
6. Find something that I enjoy, watching tv, reading a book, doing some art, cooking, knitting or sewing, listening to audiobooks or podcasts.
7. Notice and acknowledge good things that happen each day. Write them down if it helps.



My contacts

My family and friends

My list of medicines

Medicine	Dosage	How often

My GP and pharmacy

My GP _____ Phone number _____

My pharmacy _____ Phone number _____

HSELive	1850 24 1850	www.hse.ie
Local Gardaí	_____	www.garda.ie
Age Action	0818 911 109	www.ageaction.ie
ALONE	0818 222 024	www.alone.ie

Healthy Ireland - advice on wellbeing, activity and hobbies - gov.ie/healthyireland
Winter Ready - advice on preparing for winter weather and staying safe - winterready.ie

Community Call support provided by local authorities

Your local authority Community Call helpline is available if you need help with collection and delivery of food, essential household items, fuel, and medication, social isolation or other medical or healthcare needs.

If you need support, all you have to do is contact your local authority Community Call helpline. Phone **0818 222 024** and they will put you in touch with your local service, or visit www.gov.ie/communitycall

Notes

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