

COVID-19 Our Experience so far...

Last Tuesday 10th March I brought Ellie and her friends' home from netball training and they were all coughing their little hearts out. Quite normal when training out in the cold, I wound the window down, we cracked a joke and thought no more of it. Ellie felt full of cold, cough and tired for the rest of the week. None of her symptoms seemed more than a cold/cough and we weren't overly worried. I'm now embarrassed to confess she went to school! Ellie felt better by Friday night – which she puts down to a medicinal domino's pizza! We now know she had experienced Covid-19.

That Friday, as Ellie recovered, Layth started feeling poorly. He started with a cough. I stayed overnight in Cheltenham so Layth took Mia football Saturday am, she had a big game on and didn't want to miss it. In hindsight he shouldn't have taken her, he came home went to bed and pretty much has been in bed since. 9 days today.

Fever, headache, cough, exhaustion, runny nose, tiredness, achy muscles, no taste or smell and shallow breathing, 'feels like someone is sat on your chest' – yes he's experienced them all at various stages. The first few days it's was all about the cough, important to drink lots of water at this stage to clear the virus from the throat and stop it getting into the lungs. About 3 days in Layth and Mia both felt sick... (Yes Mia – her experience comes later!) Layth's felt sick on and off since, eating regularly helps, even though he gets no pleasure from eating as he can't taste his food!

The chest and breathlessness didn't really kick in until about day 5. Just when you think you should be turning a corner. This is when we were most concerned and we called 111, the news was reaching a peak regarding deaths and the seriousness of the virus and by his own admission Layth (and I) were scared. 111 were overwhelmed, 45-minute wait and no medical person available, we were advised to stay at home unless life threatening. They advised that they cannot offer testing, but all the symptoms are present, so likelihood is it is Covid-19. Advise to self-isolate.

Pharmacist on Monday recommended ibuprofen and paracetamol – BIG mistake, do not take ibuprofen. Couldn't get paracetamol for love nor money so took Panadol prescribed by the pharmacist, SECOND BIG MISTAKE – caffeine is a no no – he experienced heart palpitations big time with the caffeine – third pharmacist explained caffeine is a no should never have been given Panadol. A lovely friend brought us paracetamol and touch wood the heart palpitations have stopped. Advice number 1 – take plain paracetamol.

Advice number 2 - Olbas Oil – steam face baths really help alleviate the congestion in the face and the coughing which is what exhausts you.

However 8 days in he's worse than he felt day 1... he tried every day to get up have a shower start the day positively and ends up back in bed exhausted because he's done too much (this morning got up tried to sweep the pond, lasted 5 mins and has spent the rest of the day in bed!) Lesson number 3 – accept that for some, exhaustion/tiredness is a MAJOR symptom - don't fight it, accept it and go with it, no matter how long it takes listen to your body, rest, rest and more rest. The exertion makes you cough which makes you breathless which makes you at risk. Which brings me on to Lesson number 4 – Fresh Air, keep windows, doors open despite feeling chilly the oxygen is welcome and helps make breathing easier, call me old fashioned but also just because it feels like fresh air helps!

Mia came home from football Monday night with chest pain and a nasty cough. She was ill for about 3 days and recovered very quickly – she is a super fit 13-year-old and yet still experienced breathlessness and a nasty cough. Lesson number 5 – it does not discriminate young or old the difference is how you will react/recover – Mia has recovered super quick – Layth approaching 9 days in still what feels like nowhere near to recovery. Layth has no health issues, he's never smoked a cigarette in his life, his lungs are healthy so I expected him to recover quicker than this. Lesson 6 – don't have any expectations, it seems we all react slightly differently.

We have all been self-isolating for a week. We were slow on the uptake not going to lie, I went out for paracetamol Monday and dropped Mia to football training and shouldn't have. It's easy to be flippant and not take this seriously, that was a mistake. We are now taking it seriously and I urge you to do the same.

So Ellie, Layth and Mia have had or still have Covid-19 – not sure how they got it, (possibly from Barcelona where Layth and Mia attended a futsal tournament in Feb, or from a colleague of Layth's) but it doesn't really matter. By some miracle I have not presented symptoms the likelihood is I have had it but non symptomatic which apparently will be the case for 90% of us. Lucky us! Maybe it's mothers' nature's way of being kind so I can do my job! Playing nurse, supporting and caring for my fam and of course my actual job which incidentally has been very busy this week trying to support the Govt and NHS in service provisions for testing centres and the like. (I work for a temporary structure business and it's been quite an eye-opening week in terms of the emergency relief work that is going on to address this situation).

I have read lots of posts where people are deep cleaning but in our experience this isn't about hygiene, we are clean and it just doesn't explain why all 4 of us have had such different experiences of the virus in the same house, so save your energy!

The reason I am posting this is not for sensationalism or attention – quite the opposite, I have tried to avoid social media this week as quite frankly the public displays of selfishness has appalled me! Too many people wrapped up in their own little bubbles with no appreciation for the severity of this situation, I wonder if some are even watching the News?

The reason is simple, education. My sister in law encouraged me to tell our story so others can learn from it given the uncharted waters and the likelihood, sorry to say, that some of you will have to deal with the virus in the coming weeks. It's not about how we've been affected because actually we are fine, the girls are over it, Layth will (hopefully) recover soon – the experts say 10 days is the longest reported cases.

It's about alerting those who won't recover or react mildly.

Very few people seem to know people with this virus, and I do believe the UK statistics are so under-inflated as we are not testing (unless hospitalised) so I believe many thousands of cases are going unreported. Because people don't have it or know anyone with it, its easier to underestimate or ignore. So this is me saying 3 people in this house have it/have had it and it's not pleasant for the young and healthy amongst us so imagine what it could do to the vulnerable. So stay home, stay safe and take the advice being presented to us. Keep your distance socially and if you have any vulnerabilities, age, health issues or other – stay home! Get a puzzle out, do some gardening, facetime your friends – we've managed for a week now it's not that bad. (I'm not going to say its easy lol but it's perfectly do-able!)

Can I take this opportunity to thank our dear friends who have brought us paracetamol and vegetables 😊 and a huge respect to the NHS, pharmacists, key workers, supermarket workers who are going into battle on a daily basis with this virus you are all remarkable! Thank you.

The Karagholil's x



***UPDATE SUNDAY ***

So last night I rang 111 at about 11pm Layth's chest was seriously painful and his breathing laboured... he keeps rasping and catching his breath. I was worried and felt time to stop being martyrs and get home some help. My view is he needs some oxygen and will hopefully respond positively! I held for half hour before getting through, completed a set of questions then was told someone will ring you back.

They did at 3am... the doctor asked layth had he been to a foreign country in the last month? Yes Barcelona. Describe the symptoms... yes you have the virus. But can you cope? This is the million dollar question they ask? If you can cope (with your chest pain and laboured breathing) then stay home.

Every intuition tells me this is wrong ... chest pain and breathlessness normally means 999 get to hospital. But they cannot cope and are doing their best to keep you away - she said If you arrive at hospital and can cope we will turn you away. the doctor said she knows no more about this virus than us... she did also say that he should expect to be ill for a longer period than 8 days and that they are not testing... even the nursing staff are not being tested because they have no kits .. she herself said you would expect better from the UK.

I am not about to make this a rant about our country but this is exactly why we need to educate, this is what is so scary, how thin our resources are in dealing with this or rather not doing so! (4 hours wait to get to speak to a doctor, doctors telling us we know nothing about this virus yet and disclosing the drastic shortage of testing kits!)

It's no-ones fault but it is what it is and we should be aware of the situation, so my advice remains - try not to get it! Stay indoors x 

Also... we now know this came from layth's colleague, who caught it from his girlfriend who caught it from a friend who returned from Milan recently, unfortunately he is very poorly and a confirmed case, currently in ICU Addenbrookes - we pray he pulls through. Somehow helps to understand the trail and confirm any doubts we have that it may just be a bad case of flu - its not! and nothing to do with Barcelona (so our football family can relax a bit).

****Sunday night update****

Game changer.. vapour/steam and olbas ... layth has a steam/vapour machine constantly on his face and it is making breathing more easy! Small wins!!!!