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Guidance

Guidance for households with grandparents, parents and children living together where someone is at increased risk or has possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection

Updated 19 January 2021

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Symptoms

The most important symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

For most people, COVID-19 will be a mild illness. However, if you have any of the symptoms above, stay at home and arrange to have a test (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/ask-for-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/>) to see if you have COVID-19.

How COVID-19 is spread

COVID-19 spreads from person to person through small droplets, aerosols and through direct contact. Surfaces and belongings can also be contaminated with COVID-19 when people with the infection cough or sneeze or touch them. The risk of spread is greatest when people are close to each other, especially in poorly ventilated indoor spaces and when people spend a lot of time together in the same room.

Social distancing, washing your hands regularly, good respiratory hygiene (using and disposing of tissues), cleaning surfaces and keeping indoor spaces well ventilated are the most important ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

People who have COVID-19 can infect others up to 2 days before symptoms start, and for up to 10 days after. They can pass the infection to others, even if they have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all, which is why they must stay at home.

People who live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 are at higher risk of developing COVID-19. They could spread the disease to others even when feeling well, which is why they must stay at home.

What do we mean by a possible or confirmed case of COVID-19?

A possible case is a person who has COVID-19 symptoms and is currently awaiting a test result.

A confirmed case is a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Who this guidance is for

This guidance is intended for:

- households with children and someone aged over 70 living together
- clinically vulnerable people (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>) including anyone aged 70 or over, as well as those under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (that is, anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):

- chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/asthma/>), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease-copd/>), emphysema or bronchitis (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bronchitis/>)
- chronic heart disease, such as heart failure (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heart-failure/>)
- chronic kidney disease (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/kidney-disease/>)
- chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hepatitis/>)
- chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/parkinsons-disease/>), motor neurone disease (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/motor-neurone-disease/>), multiple sclerosis (MS) (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/multiple-sclerosis/>) or cerebral palsy
- diabetes (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diabetes/>)
- problems with your spleen – for example, sickle cell (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sickle-cell-disease/>) disease or if you have had your spleen removed
- a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hiv-and-aids/>), or medicines such as steroid tablets (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/steroids/>) or chemotherapy (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chemotherapy/>)
- being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)
- pregnant women

There is a further category of people with serious underlying health conditions who are clinically extremely vulnerable, meaning they are at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus. They, their family and carers should follow the guidance on shielding (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>).

Will my household be tested if we think we have COVID-19 symptoms?

Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, however mild, needs to arrange to have a test (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/>) and they and their household should self-isolate immediately. Find out more about testing (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection#tests-for-covid-19>).

Your isolation period includes the day your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you do not have symptoms), and the next 10 full days. This means that if, for example, your symptoms started at any time on the 15th of the month (or if you did not have symptoms but your first positive COVID-19 test was taken on the 15th), your isolation period ends at 23:59 hrs on the 25th.

If your test is negative, you and your household can stop self-isolating.

If you have tested positive, you will receive a request by text, email or phone call to log into the NHS Test and Trace service website (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/nhs-test-and-trace-if-youve-been-in-contact-with-a-person-who-has-coronavirus/>) and provide information about recent close contacts. If you do not have access to the web, then you will be phoned by a contact tracer

working for the NHS Test and Trace service. The information you provide will be handled in strict confidence and will enable the NHS Test and Trace service to contact those people and provide them with advice on whether they should go into self-isolation. This will help stop the spread of COVID-19.

It is very important that you provide this information, as it will play a vital role in helping to protect your family, friends and the wider community.

The people contacted will not be told your identity, but by alerting them when you first develop symptoms, you can help make sure that they are prepared for being contacted by the Test and Trace service. It is now an offence to knowingly provide false information about your close contacts to NHS Test and Trace, and failure to comply with these requirements may result in a fine.

People with symptoms that may be due to COVID-19 and their household are asked to stay at home. Anyone who is notified that they have tested positive for COVID-19 and advised to self-isolate has a legal duty to self-isolate. Failure to comply may result in a fine, starting from £1,000.

Why staying at home is very important

It is very important that people with symptoms that may be due to COVID-19 and their household members stay at home. Staying at home will help prevent the spread of the virus to family, friends, the wider community and particularly those who are clinically extremely vulnerable (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>). Controlling the spread of the virus will help us to protect the NHS and save lives.

Those with symptoms should remain at home for the full isolation period. This will reduce the risk of you infecting others.

If you or anyone in your household has symptoms that may be caused by COVID-19, then you should avoid contact with other household members as much as possible.

The other members of your household, including those who do not have any symptoms, should also stay at home and not leave the house for 10 days. Do not go to work, school or public areas, and do not use public transport or taxis. If possible, you should not go out even to buy food or other essentials, and any exercise should be taken within your home. Your isolation period includes the day the first person in your household's symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms, whether this was an LFD or PCR test), and the next 10 full days. This means that if, for example, your 10 day isolation period starts on the 15th of the month, your isolation period ends at 23:59 hrs on the 25th and you can return to your normal routine. Staying at home for 10 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community.

If you require help with buying groceries, other shopping or picking up medication, or walking a dog, you should ask friends or family. Alternatively, you can order your shopping online and medication by phone or online. Delivery drivers should not come into your home, so make sure you ask them to leave items outside for collection.

Further guidance on accessing food and essential supplies (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-accessing-food-and-essential-supplies>) is available.

If you are unable to work due to COVID-19, see guidance from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to find out about support available to you (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/worker-support>). You may be entitled to a one-off payment of £500 through the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme if you are

required to stay at home and self-isolate. You will be eligible if you live in England and meet all the following criteria:

- you have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace
- you are employed or self-employed
- you cannot work from home and will lose income as a result
- you are claiming at least one of the following benefits: Universal Credit, Working Tax Credits, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Pension Credit or Housing Benefit

Visit your local authority's website for more information.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, or a positive test, and have a person aged 70 or over, or a clinically vulnerable person, living with you

You should take the following actions:

Where possible, arrange for anyone who is clinically vulnerable (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>) or clinically extremely vulnerable (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>) to move out of your home, to stay with friends or family for the duration of your home isolation period. If you cannot arrange for vulnerable people to move out of your home, stay away from them as much as possible, following the shielding guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>).

Those who are clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable should be supported to take precautions to minimise their contact with other people in your household, regardless of whether others have symptoms or not. They should minimise time spent in shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas. Any shared spaces should be well ventilated.

Aim to keep 2 metres (3 steps) away from the person(s) aged 70 or over, or clinically vulnerable, and encourage them to sleep in a different bed where possible. If they can, they should use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household. Make sure they use separate towels from the other people in your house, both for drying themselves after bathing or showering and for hand-hygiene purposes.

If you do share a toilet and bathroom with a person aged 70 or over, or clinically vulnerable, it is important that you clean the facilities every time you use them (for example, wiping surfaces you have come into contact with). Another tip is to consider drawing up a rota for bathing, with the older person using the facilities first.

If you share a kitchen with a person who is aged 70 or over, or clinically vulnerable, avoid using it while they are present. If they can, they should take their meals back to their room to eat. If you have one, use a dishwasher to clean and dry the family's used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using your usual washing up liquid and warm water and dry them thoroughly. If the person who is aged 70 or over, or clinically vulnerable, is using their own crockery and cutlery, remember to use a separate tea towel for drying these.

It will be difficult for some people to separate themselves from others at home. You should do your very best to follow this guidance and everyone in your household should:

- wash their hands more frequently, for 20 seconds, with soap and water or use hand sanitiser and avoid touching their face
- regularly clean frequently touched surfaces
- follow the stay at home guidance for households with possible COVID-19 infection (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>) which contains more detailed guidance on what to do about cleaning, disposal of waste, laundry and other useful information

Living with children

Not all these measures will be possible if you are living with children but keep following this advice to the best of your ability.

Children with COVID-19 appear to be less severely affected. It is nevertheless important to do your best to ensure that all members of your household follow this guidance.

Parents or guardians are legally responsible for ensuring that anyone under 18 self-isolates if they test positive for COVID-19 and are contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate.

If you or your family need to seek medical advice

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness or the illness in any household members is worsening. If it's not an emergency, contact the NHS 111 online COVID-19 service (<https://111.nhs.uk/>). If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111.

If it is a medical emergency and you need to call an ambulance, dial 999 and inform the call handler or operator that you or your relative have COVID-19 symptoms.

All routine medical and dental appointments should usually be cancelled while you and the family are at home. If you are concerned or have been asked to attend in person within the period you are home isolating, discuss this with your medical contact first (for example, your GP or dentist, local hospital or outpatient service), using the number they have provided.

Looking after your wellbeing while staying at home

Staying at home for a prolonged period can be difficult, frustrating and lonely for some people, and you or other household members may feel low. It can be particularly challenging if you don't have much space or access to a garden.

It's important to remember to take care of your mind as well as your body and to get support if you need it. Stay in touch with family and friends over the phone or on social media. There are also sources of support and information that can help, such as the Every Mind Matters website (<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>).

Think about things you can do during your time at home. People who have stayed at home for a week or more have kept themselves busy with activities such as cooking, reading, online learning and watching films. If you feel well enough, you can take part in light exercise within your home.

For family members who are 70 or over, or clinically vulnerable, and are not symptomatic, it is important to avoid contact with other family members as much as possible see guidance above on persons aged 70 or over and the clinically vulnerable.

Many people find it helpful to remind themselves why what they are doing is so important. Hopefully, none of your family will experience anything more than mild symptoms, but some people are badly affected by COVID-19. By staying home, you are helping to protect your friends and family and other people in your community, as well as making sure the NHS does not get overwhelmed.

Remember it is OK to share your concerns with others you trust and in doing so you may end up providing support to them too. Or you can use an NHS recommended helpline (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>).

See more Guidance for the public on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of COVID-19 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19>).

There are things that you can do to help make self-isolation easier. These include:

- planning ahead and thinking about what you will need in order to be able to stay at home for the full duration of isolation. Consider and plan for those in your home who are aged 70 or over, or otherwise clinically vulnerable
- talking to your employer, friends and family to ask for their help to access the things you will need while staying at home
- creating a contact list with phone numbers of neighbours, schools, employers, chemists, NHS 111
- thinking about and planning how you can get access to food and other supplies, such as medications, that you will need during this period. Set up online shopping accounts if possible
- asking friends or family to drop off anything you need or ordering supplies online, but make sure these are left outside your home for you to collect
- ensuring that you keep in touch with friends and family over the phone or through social media
- thinking about things you can do during your time at home, such as cooking, reading, online learning and watching films
- planning out the full 10 days, such as on a make-shift calendar, which many people find helpful. You may also find it helpful to plan in advance what you will do if, for example, someone in your household were to feel much worse, such as having difficulties breathing
- remembering that physical exercise can be good for your wellbeing when you are feeling better. Look for online classes or courses that can help you do light exercise in your home

Support bubbles

If you are in a single adult household – in other words, adults who live alone or with dependent children only – you can now form a support bubble with one other household. All those in a support bubble will be able to spend time together inside each other's homes, including overnight, without needing to stay 2 metres apart. You should only form a support bubble with one other household. Once formed, you should not change the members of your support bubble. Further information about bubbling can be found in the making a support bubble with another household (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household>) guidance.

If any member of your support bubble – either someone in your own household or one that you have formed a bubble with – develops symptoms or tests positive for coronavirus you should all follow the stay at home guidance for households (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>) and isolate for 10 days.

Face coverings

Used correctly, a face covering may help to protect others by reducing the transmission of COVID-19.

If you have possible or confirmed COVID-19 and you live with others, wear a face covering (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>) or surgical mask inside your home when spending time in shared parts of the household, in addition to avoiding contact with other members of the household as much as possible. Stay at home for at least 10 days from when the symptoms started. Wearing a face covering does not replace this.

People who are self-isolating, and members of their household, should double bag disposable face coverings and store them for 72 hours before putting them in a 'black bag' waste bin.

Ending self-isolation and household isolation

Ending self-isolation

If you have had symptoms of COVID-19, then you may end your self-isolation after 10 days and return to your normal routine if you do not have symptoms other than cough or anosmia (a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell). If you still have a high temperature, keep self-isolating and seek medical advice.

After 10 days, if you just have a cough or anosmia, you do not need to continue to self-isolate. This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone.

If you continue to feel unwell and have not already sought medical advice, you should use the NHS 111 online COVID-19 service (<https://111.nhs.uk/>). If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

Ending household isolation

After 10 days, if the first person to become ill feels better and no longer has symptoms other than cough or anosmia (a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell) they can return to their normal routine.

Everyone else in the household who remains well should end their isolation after 10 days.

If anyone in the household becomes unwell during the 10-day period, they should arrange to have a test (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/ask-for-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/>) to see if they have COVID-19. If their test result is positive, they must follow the same advice for people with COVID-19 symptoms – that is, after 10 days of their symptoms starting, if they feel better and no longer have symptoms other than cough or anosmia, they can also return to their normal routine. However, if their test result is negative, they must continue with isolation as part of the household for the full 10 days.

Should someone develop COVID-19 symptoms late in the 10-day household isolation period, the isolation period for the household does not need to be extended. Only the person with new COVID-19 symptoms has to stay at home for at least a further 10 days and should arrange to have a test (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/ask-for-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/>) to see if they have COVID-19.

At the end of the 10-day period, anyone in the household who has not become unwell can return to their normal routine.

If any person in the household with COVID-19 symptoms has not had any signs of improvement and has not already sought medical advice, they should use the NHS 111 online COVID-19 service (<https://111.nhs.uk/>). If they do not have internet access, they should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency, they should dial 999.

A cough or anosmia (a loss of, or change in, the normal sense of taste or smell), may persist for several weeks in some people, despite the infection having cleared. A persistent cough or anosmia does not mean someone must continue to self-isolate for more than 10 days.

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