

Frequently Asked Questions – Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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The coronavirus – what you need to know

Public Health England have set up a Blog to provide up to date relevant information on the coronavirus, including signs and symptoms, where the virus is spreading from and what you may need to do to reduce your chances of catching the virus. The Blog can be accessed using this [link](#). Also, a coronavirus public information campaign has been launched across the UK which can be accessed using this [link](#).

As public health advice evolves rapidly, we recommend the following sites for all up-to-date public health information on coronavirus: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

How long is the incubation period?

The incubation period is the time between infection and the onset of clinical symptoms of disease. Current estimates of the incubation period range from 1 to 12 days, with average estimates of between 5 to 6 days. These estimates will be refined as more data become available. Based on information from other types of coronavirus diseases, the incubation period of this coronavirus (COVID-19) could be up to 14 days.

Can the virus be caught from a person who has no symptoms?

Understanding the time when infected patients may spread the virus to others is critical for control efforts. Detailed medical information from people infected is needed to determine the infectious period of the coronavirus. According to recent reports, it may be possible that people infected with the coronavirus may be infectious before showing significant symptoms. However, based on currently available data, the people who have symptoms are causing the majority of virus spread.

Who can I speak to within Dimensions if I need any advice?

If you need any further advice on the virus you can speak with your locality manager.

We have also set up a helpline for the families of the people we support. The line is open from 10am to 2pm, Monday to Friday, and will give family members the opportunity to ask questions of our team of family consultants. Please ask your relative's support team for the helpline number if required.

Does Dimensions have a plan?

Yes. Our Pandemic Emergency Response Team has been meeting to consider what actions to take and when. The underlying plan is called the Flu and other Contagious Viruses Pandemic Contingency Plan for the Dimensions Group.

Dimensions are taking all the steps necessary to make sure that the persons we support are as safe as possible from the virus, and taking steps to make sure we will be able to continue to provide support to their family member. That is why we are preventing access to Services by family members in most circumstances. Regular monitoring of people supported is being carried out and even stricter infection control procedures have been implemented.

What's the difference between shielding, self-isolation and social distancing?

Shielding, self-isolation and social distancing are very important in order to protect yourselves and others from coronavirus. What are they, and which should you be doing?

In brief:

- **Everyone in the UK should be staying at home**, in line with the government's announcement on 23 March. Some people are calling this "lockdown". It means staying at home and only going out to get essential supplies like food and medicine and once a day for exercise. You can also go out for medical needs and for work if it absolutely cannot be done for home. **When you are out, stay at least two metres away from people that you don't live with.**
- **Self-isolation is the most effective way of preventing coronavirus spreading.** Government advice is to self-isolate if you have any coronavirus symptoms, might have been exposed to it, or live with someone with symptoms.
- **Shielding is similar to self-isolating, but for longer**, and is for people who are deemed extremely vulnerable due to a specific health condition.
- For many of us, staying at home and minimising contact with our friends and family will be very difficult. It's important that even though you need to be physically apart, you stay connected with friends and family over the phone or on social media. You can get support for your wellbeing from the [Every Mind Matters](#) website.

Staying at home

- Who needs to stay at home?

Everyone in the UK.

- How long will we have to stay at home?

Initially for three weeks from 23 March, at which point the Government will look at it again and relax the rules if the evidence shows this is possible.

- What can I do in 'lockdown'?

- You can go out for food supplies
- You can go out for exercise once a day (such as walking, running or cycling)
- You can go out for work where this absolutely cannot be done from home
- You can also go out for medical reasons, including caring for someone
- When you go out, stay two metres away from people you don't live with
- You should wash your hands as soon as you get home
- See the [full government guidance on staying at home and away from others](#)

Shielding

Shielding is a measure to protect those who are at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (Covid-19) from coming into contact with the virus.

- [Who needs to do shielding?](#)

Extremely vulnerable people need to do shielding to protect themselves. The people with heart conditions who fall into this category are:

- people who have had a **heart transplant**.
- people who are pregnant and have **significant heart disease (of any type including congenital)**

See the [government's list of who falls into this category](#). People with any other heart conditions are advised to carefully follow the government's stay at home advice, which applies to all of us.

- [How long should I do shielding?](#)

Those most at risk should receive a letter or text from the NHS to strongly advise them **not to go out for 12 weeks** from the day you receive the recommendation. You will be contacted again if there are any updates to the advice. If you think you or a loved one are in this highest risk category and have not received a letter from the NHS by Sunday 29 March or been contacted by your GP, get in touch with your GP or hospital doctor by phone or online.

- [How do I do shielding?](#)

Stay in your home, do not go out for shopping, leisure, or travel, or go out for a walk in public places. If you have a garden, you can go out into your garden. When you're having food or medicine delivered, **these should be left at your door in order to minimise your contact.**

Don't have any visitors, except people who give you essential healthcare and personal support. These people should **wash their hands** when they come into your home or use hand sanitiser. Carers and care workers should stay away if they have any of the symptoms of coronavirus.

Use the telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services.

Keep in touch with people, call them, email them or use social media to contact them.

Wash your hands more often, including after you blow your nose, sneeze or cough and after you eat or handle food. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home. The people you live with need to take the appropriate steps to help shield you too. If you live with other people:

- **Minimise the time that you spend in shared spaces**, like kitchens, bathrooms and sitting rooms, and keep those spaces well ventilated.
- **Keep two metres away from people you live with** and ask them to sleep in a different bed to you, if they can.
- **If you can, use a separate bathroom from the people you live with**, and use separate towels in the bathroom for your shower, bath, or drying your hands.
- **If you do share a toilet and bathroom with others, make sure they are cleaned after every use** (for example, wiping surfaces you have come into contact with). Try to shower/bathe first.

- **In the kitchen, avoid eating while others are in there**, and take your meals back to your room if you can. Use a dishwasher if you can, and if not then wash them as usual but use a separate towel for drying them.

Self-isolation

Self-isolation means staying at home. It is similar to shielding, but is for a shorter time and the main focus is on not spreading the virus. Self-isolation is the most effective way of preventing the coronavirus from spreading.

- [Who should be doing it?](#)

Self-isolation is strongly advised for anyone who has the symptoms of coronavirus or who might have been exposed to it, or who lives with someone who has symptoms of coronavirus.

- [How long should I self-isolate?](#)

If you live alone and you have symptoms of COVID-19, however mild, stay at home for 7 days from when your symptoms started. If you live with others and you're the first to have symptoms, then you must stay home for 7 days. But all other household members must stay in the house for **14 days**. The 14 day period starts from the day the first person in the house became ill.

- [How do I self-isolate?](#)

The measures for self-isolation are:

- **Stay at home and do not go out.** Don't go to work, school, or use public transportation or taxis.
- **Stay at least three steps away (two metres or six feet) from other people in your home.** Be particularly careful around those who are over 70, are pregnant, or who have a long-term underlying health condition.
- **Avoid having any visitors in your home.** Ask them to leave any deliveries at your door.
- **Don't go out to buy food or collect medicine, if possible.** Order them by phone or online, or ask someone else to drop them off at your home.
- **Stay at least three steps away (two metres away or six feet) from other people outside** if you need to leave your home to exercise.
- **Sleep alone if you can.**
- Make sure you and any household members are washing your hands regularly and taking extra care of your hygiene.

See our tips on [how to self-isolate healthily](#). For more information on self-isolation, see the advice from [Public Health England](#).

Social distancing

Social distancing is about limiting face-to-face interactions with people. This helps to slow the spread of Covid-19 and to help protect yourself from catching it.

- Who should be doing it?

Everyone should be practising social distancing right now, and these principles are reinforced by the current "stay at home" instructions from the Government. Social distancing is doubly important if you are at high risk or particularly high risk. See [the groups that are at high risk or particularly high risk](#).

- How do I do it?

The measures for social distancing are:

- **Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (Covid-19).** These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough.
- **Avoid non-essential use of public transport.** Vary your travel times to avoid rush hour, when possible. You must also follow the government instructions about staying at home apart from the specified exceptions (see above)
- **Work from home if at all possible.** The government says your employer should support you to do this.
- **Use online or telephone services** to contact your GP or other essential services.
- You should also make sure that you and any essential visitors (like carers) wash your hands regularly, including after you've been out.
- You can go outside for a walk, but make sure that you stay more than 2 metres from other people.

What is the recovery time for the coronavirus disease?

Using available preliminary data, the median time from onset to clinical recovery for mild cases is approximately 2 weeks and is 3-6 weeks for patients with severe or critical disease.

How long does the coronavirus last on surfaces?

It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses (including preliminary information on the COVID-19 virus) may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days.

How long should I stay in home isolation if I have the coronavirus disease?

If you live alone and you have symptoms of coronavirus illness (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home for 7 days from when your symptoms started.

Can the coronavirus disease spread through air?

Airborne spread has not been reported for COVID-19 and it is not believed to be a major driver of transmission based on available evidence

What is the treatment for the coronavirus disease?

There is no specific treatment for disease caused by a novel coronavirus. However, many of the symptoms can be treated and therefore treatment based on the patient's clinical condition.

Is there a vaccine, drug or treatment for COVID-19?

Not yet. To date, there is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat COVID-2019. However, those affected should receive care to relieve symptoms. People with serious illness should be hospitalized. Most patients recover thanks to supportive care.

Possible vaccines and some specific drug treatments are under investigation. They are being tested through clinical trials. WHO is coordinating efforts to develop vaccines and medicines to prevent and treat COVID-19.

The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cover your cough with the bend of elbow or tissue, and maintain a distance of at least 1 meter (3 feet) from people who are coughing or sneezing.

Can you contract the coronavirus disease from a package in the mail?

Because it's a new illness, we do not know exactly how coronavirus spreads from person to person. Similar viruses are spread in cough droplets. It's very unlikely it can be spread through things like packages or food

How can you prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease?

- Wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds.
- Always wash your hands when you get home or into work.
- Use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze.
- Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards.

Are masks effective against the coronavirus disease?

If you are healthy, you only need to wear a mask if you are taking care of a person with suspected 2019-nCoV infection. Masks are effective only when used in combination with frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. If you wear a mask, then you must know how to use it and dispose of it properly

Can babies get the coronavirus disease?

We know it is possible for people of any age to be infected with the virus, but so far there are relatively few cases of COVID-19 reported among children

How can I protect others when I cough or sneeze?

Always sneeze and cough into tissues as this will help to prevent the virus-containing droplets from your nose and mouth entering the air where they can infect others; throw away used tissues immediately and wash your hands. Clean surfaces regularly to keep them free of germs

How widely could the coronavirus spread in the UK?

As it is a new virus, the lack of immunity in the population (and the absence as yet of an effective vaccine) means that COVID-19 has the potential to spread extensively. The current data seem to show that we are all susceptible to catching this disease

Can pets get coronavirus?

There is no evidence that pets can be infected with the coronavirus according to the WHO.

However, it's still important to protect yourself from bacteria that can pass between pets and humans.

"You cannot catch coronavirus from your cat or your dog or any other pet you might have at home, but you should be washing your hands because there are a lot of bugs that animals carry that you could get sick from,"

Is there anything I should not do?

The following measures ARE NOT effective against COVID-2019 and can be harmful:

- Smoking
- Wearing multiple masks
- Taking antibiotics (See question "Are there any medicines or therapies that can prevent or cure COVID-19?")

In any case, if you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing seek medical care early to reduce the risk of developing a more severe infection and be sure to share your recent travel history with your health care provider.