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1. Home (https://www.gov.uk/)
2. Health and social care (https://www.gov.uk/health-and-social-care)
3. Public health (https://www.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/public-health)
4. Health protection (https://www.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/health-protection)
5. Infectious diseases (https://www.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/health-protection-infectious-diseases)
6. COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance)

- Public Health
  England (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england)

Guidance

Stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection

Updated 31 August 2021

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Who this guidance is for

It is important that we all take steps to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) infection in the community to save lives and protect the NHS.

This guidance is for:

- people with symptoms that may be caused by COVID-19, including those who are waiting for a test
- people who have received a positive COVID-19 test result (whether or not they have symptoms)
- people who currently live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 symptoms, or with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19

In this guidance a household means:

- one person living alone
- a group of people (who may or may not be related) living at the same address and who share cooking facilities, bathrooms or toilets, or living areas. This may include students in boarding schools or halls of residence who share such facilities
- a group of people who share a nomadic way of life for example those who live on Traveller sites, in vehicles or on canal boats

Follow separate guidance if you have had contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 but do not currently live in the same household as them (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person). If you have arrived in the UK from overseas you may also need to self-isolate (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england).

This guidance applies in England.

Symptoms

The most important symptoms of 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, even if your symptoms are mild, stay at home and 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/).

There are several other symptoms linked with COVID-19. These other symptoms may have another cause and are not on their own a reason to have a COVID-19 test. If you are concerned about your symptoms, seek medical advice.

If you have received one or more doses of COVID-19 vaccine and have symptoms of COVID-19 or have received a positive test result, you should still follow this guidance. This is because it is still possible to get COVID-19 and spread it to others even if you are vaccinated.

Main messages

Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or a positive test result should stay at home and self-isolate immediately. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should arrange to have a PCR test as soon as possible. This still applies even if you have received one or more doses of COVID-19 vaccine.

If you live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, you should stay at home and self-isolate. From 16 August, if you are fully vaccinated or aged under 18 years and 6 months you will not be required to self-isolate if you are a contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

You could be fined if you do not self-isolate following a notification by NHS Test and Trace[footnote 1]. You may be entitled to a one-off payment of £500 through the NHS Test and Trace Support Payment scheme (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme) if you are required to stay at home and self-isolate or you are the parent or guardian of a child who has been told to self-isolate.

Tests for COVID-19

There are 2 main types of test currently being used to detect if someone has COVID-19:

- polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests
- lateral flow device antigen (LFD) tests - also known as rapid lateral flow tests

PCR tests detect the RNA (ribonucleic acid, the genetic material) of a virus. PCR tests are the most reliable COVID-19 tests. It takes some time to get the results because they are usually processed in a laboratory. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should arrange to have a PCR test (https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test).

People who live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 can also take a PCR test, as they are at higher risk of being infected even if they do not have symptoms.

LFD tests detect proteins in the coronavirus and work in a similar way to a pregnancy test. They are simple and quick to use. LFD tests are not as accurate as PCR tests in all circumstances, but can detect a similar number of people with high levels of coronavirus as PCR tests. They are mainly used in people who do not have symptoms of COVID-19.

People in England who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 can take part in regular testing using LFD tests. Many people already do this as part of school or workplace LFD testing programmes. All of these programmes are known as 'asymptomatic testing programmes' and can help reduce the spread of infection to others.

If you have received one or more doses of COVID-19 vaccine

If you have been vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine, you are less likely to catch COVID-19, and to become severely ill if you do catch it. You are also less likely to spread COVID-19 to other people, but it is still possible for this to happen.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or have received a positive test result, you should still follow this guidance and self-isolate even if you have received one or more doses of COVID-19 vaccine. This will reduce the risk of spreading infection and help to protect other people.

From 16 August, if you are a contact of someone who has COVID-19 and you are fully vaccinated, or aged under 18 years 6 months, you will not be required to self-isolate. There is further information in the Household contacts who are not required to self-isolate section.

If you have COVID-19 symptoms or have received a positive COVID-19 test result

Stay at home and self-isolate

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19, stay at home and self-isolate immediately. If you have a positive test result but do not have symptoms, stay at home and self-isolate as soon as you receive the results.

Your household needs to isolate too. Please see section below for information on what the other members of your household need to do.

Arrange to have a PCR test online (https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus) or by phone by calling 119 if you have not already had one. Stay at home while you are waiting for a home test kit, a test site appointment or a test result. You can leave your home in a few specific circumstances, but do not go to work, school, or public areas and do not use public transport or taxis. See circumstances in which you can leave home (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1045/made).

If you need to leave your home to get to a test site, wear a face covering, stay at least 2 metres apart from other people who you do not live with, and return home immediately afterwards.

If you are notified by NHS Test and Trace of a positive test result you must complete your full isolation period, except for certain situations where you had an assisted LFD test which was followed up by a negative PCR test. Your isolation period starts immediately from when your symptoms started, or, if you do not have any symptoms, from when your test was taken. 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 23:59hrs on the 25th.

If you receive a request by text, email or phone to log into the NHS Test and Trace (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/) service website you should do this. You will be asked about when your symptoms started. You should provide this information because it will be used to identify who has been in contact with you while you have been infectious.

You will be asked about your recent contacts so that they can be given public health advice. They will not be told your identity. 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.

You can return to your normal routine and stop self-isolating after 10 full days if your symptoms have gone, or if the only symptoms you have are a cough or anosmia, which can last for several weeks. If you still have a high temperature after 10 days or are otherwise unwell, stay at home and seek medical advice.

If you are isolating because of a positive test result but did not have any symptoms, and you develop COVID-19 symptoms within your isolation period, start a new 10 day isolation period by counting 10 full days from the day following your symptom onset.

If you develop COVID-19 symptoms at any point after ending your first period of isolation you and your household should follow the steps in this guidance again.

Most people with COVID-19 will experience a mild illness. Seek prompt medical attention if your illness or the illness of someone in your household is worsening.

Stay as far away from other members of your household as possible, especially if they are clinically extremely vulnerable (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/19-july-guidance-on-protecting-people-who-are-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-from-covid-19). Wherever possible, avoid using shared spaces such as kitchens and other living areas while others are present and take your meals back to your room to eat. 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 a surgical mask when spending time in shared areas inside your home.

Take exercise within your home, garden or private outdoor space. Follow the general advice to reduce the spread of the 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#Reducing) within your household.

It may be difficult for some people to separate themselves from others in their household. Not all these measures will be possible if you are living with children or have caring responsibilities, but follow this guidance to the best of your ability in these circumstances.

People who live on a Traveller site, in a vehicle or on a canal boat may have added difficulties in accessing water and sanitation. You should aim to do all that you can to reduce the spread of COVID-19 with the space available to you and your household. Further support and practical advice are provided below.

If you have a negative COVID-19 PCR test result after being tested because you had symptoms

If your PCR test result is negative but you still have symptoms, you may have another viral illness such as a cold, flu or a stomach bug. You should stay at home until you feel well and for at least 2 more days if you have had diarrhoea or vomiting (https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diarrhoea-and-vomiting/). Seek medical attention if you are concerned about your symptoms.

You can stop isolating as long as:

- you are well and have not had diarrhoea or vomiting for at least 2 days
- no one else in your household has symptoms
- no one else in your household has tested positive for COVID-19
- you have not been advised by NHS Test and Trace that you are legally required to self-isolate (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/)

Anyone in your household who is isolating because of your symptoms can also stop isolating.

Testing after your isolation period has ended

If you have tested positive by PCR for COVID-19, you will probably have developed some immunity to the disease. However, it cannot be guaranteed that everyone will develop immunity, or how long it will last. It is possible for PCR tests to remain positive for some time after COVID-19 infection.

Anyone who has previously received a positive COVID-19 PCR test result should not be re-tested within 90 days of that test, unless they develop any new symptoms of COVID-19.

If, however, you do have an LFD antigen test within 90 days of a previous positive COVID-19 PCR test, for example as part of a workplace or community testing programme, and the result of this test is positive, you and your household should self-isolate and follow the steps in this guidance again.

If it is more than 90 days since you tested positive by PCR for COVID-19, and you have new symptoms of COVID-19, or a positive LFD antigen or PCR test, follow the steps in this guidance again.

If you take part in asymptomatic testing

People in England who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 can take part in regular testing using LFD tests. Asymptomatic testing can help to identify people who may have COVID-19, but are not feeling unwell, so that they can take steps to reduce the spread of infection to others.

Asymptomatic LFD testing is most effective when tests are taken regularly, twice a week. More information on ordering LFD tests is available (https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test). If you test positive for COVID-19 by LFD test, you should self-isolate and follow this guidance. You should also request a follow-up PCR test.

LFD tests can be taken in 2 ways:

- an assisted test is where the person takes the test themselves under the supervision of a trained operator, and this operator processes the test, reads and reports the result
- a home (self-reported) test is where a person takes the test themselves and reads and reports their own result

If you have any of the symptoms of COVID-19, you should request a PCR test.

If your assisted LFD test result is positive

If your LFD test was an assisted test, and the result is positive, you must self-isolate immediately. You could be fined if you do not do this. You may be entitled to a one-off payment of £500 through the NHS Test and Trace Support Payment scheme (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme) if you are required to self-isolate.

You should also take a follow-up PCR test (https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) as soon as possible and within 2 days of the positive LFD test at the latest.

While waiting for your follow-up PCR test result you and your household members should follow this guidance. If you receive a negative follow-up PCR test result, and this PCR test was taken within 2 days of the positive LFD test, you and your household will be told by NHS Test and Trace that you can stop self-isolating. However, you and your household must continue to self-isolate if:

- this PCR test result is positive
- you choose not to take a follow-up PCR test
- your follow-up PCR test was taken more than 2 days after the positive LFD test result

It is important to book your follow-up PCR test as soon as you can following your positive LFD test result.

If your home (self-reported) LFD test result is positive

If your LFD test was taken at home (self-reported), you should self-isolate immediately. You and your household members should follow all this guidance. You should also arrange to have a follow-up PCR test (https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) as soon as possible. If the follow-up PCR test result is negative, you and your household contacts can stop self-isolating.

If you live in the same household as someone with COVID-19

Stay at home and self-isolate. Do not go to work, school, or public areas and do not use public transport or taxis. From 16 August, if you are fully vaccinated or aged under 18 years and 6 months, you will not be required to self-isolate if you live in the same household as someone with COVID-19. See the section below for more information. If you have only received one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, you will still be required to self-isolate.

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) 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.

If you are identified as a contact and asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace (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/), including by the NHS COVID-19 app (https://faq.covid19.nhs.uk/article/KA-01339/en-us) you may be entitled to a payment of £500 from your local authority under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme). If you are the parent or guardian of a child who has been told to self-isolate you may also be entitled to this payment.

Failure to comply with self-isolation may result in a fine, starting from £1,000. 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.

Household contacts who are not required to self-isolate from 16 August

From 16 August, you will not be required to self-isolate if you live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 and any of the following apply:

- you are fully vaccinated
- you are below the age of 18 years 6 months
- you have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- you are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

Fully vaccinated means that you have been vaccinated with an MHRA approved COVID-19 vaccine in the UK, and at least 14 days have passed since you received the recommended doses of that vaccine.

NHS Test and Trace will contact you to let you know that you have been identified as a contact and check whether you are legally required to self-isolate. If you are not legally required to self-isolate, you will be provided with advice on testing and given guidance on preventing the spread of COVID-19. Even if you do not have symptoms, you will be advised to have a PCR test as soon as possible.

You should not arrange to have a PCR test if you have previously received a positive PCR test result in the last 90 days, unless you develop any new symptoms of COVID-19, as it is possible for PCR tests to remain positive for some time after COVID-19 infection.

Even if you are vaccinated, you can still be infected with COVID-19 and pass it on to others. If you are identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 but you are not required to self-isolate, you can help protect others by following the guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do#keeping-yourself-and-others-safe). As well as getting a PCR test, you may also consider:

- limiting close contact with other people outside your household, especially in enclosed spaces

- wearing a face covering in enclosed spaces and where you are unable to maintain social distancing
- limiting contact with anyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable
- taking part in twice weekly LFD testing (https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests)

This advice applies while the person in your household with COVID-19 is self-isolating.

If you are a health or social care worker who has been identified as a household contact and are exempt from self-isolation, there is additional guidance available (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings) that you should follow to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 in these settings.

Children and young people aged under 18 years 6 months who usually attend an education or childcare setting and who have been identified as a close contact should continue to attend the setting as normal. They do not need to wear a face covering within the setting, but it is expected and recommended that these are worn when travelling on public or dedicated transport.

If you develop symptoms at any time, even if these are mild, self-isolate immediately, arrange to have a COVID-19 PCR test (https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) and follow the guidance for people with COVID-19 symptoms.

PCR tests if you are self-isolating as a contact

You can arrange to have a single PCR test whether or not you have symptoms. This is because you are at a higher risk of being infected. The results of the PCR test will help NHS Test and Trace contact people who may have caught the virus from you. They can then self-isolate and avoid passing it on to others.

You should arrange to have this PCR test as soon as possible within your 10 day isolation period, so that NHS Test and Trace can identify the people that you have been in contact with. You can order a home test kit or book an appointment at a test site. To reduce the risk to others you should only use a test site if you are unable to use the home PCR testing service. If you go to a test site, stay at least 2 metres apart from other people you do not live with, and return home immediately afterwards. If you order a home test kit you should use and return it within 48 hours of receiving it.

If your PCR test result is negative, you should still stay at home and self-isolate to avoid putting others at risk, unless you are not required to do so. This is because you could still become infectious during the 10 day isolation period.

If your PCR test result is positive, follow the advice for people with COVID-19 to stay at home and start a further full 10 day isolation period, regardless of where you are in your original 10 day isolation period. This means that your total isolation period will be longer than 10 days.

You should not arrange to have a PCR test if you have previously received a positive PCR test result in the last 90 days, unless you develop any new symptoms of COVID-19. It is possible for PCR tests to remain positive for some time after COVID-19 infection.

LFD tests while you are self-isolating as a contact

If you are regularly taking part in asymptomatic testing using LFD tests, you can continue to do so as long as these tests are taken at home. Do not leave your house during your self-isolation period to take part in an assisted asymptomatic testing programme.

If your LFD test result is negative, you should still stay at home and self-isolate to avoid putting others at risk. This is because you could still become infectious during the 10 day isolation period.

If your LFD test result is positive, you should arrange to have a follow-up PCR test (https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) as soon as possible.

If you develop symptoms while you are self-isolating as a contact

If you develop symptoms while you are isolating, you should arrange to have a COVID-19 PCR test (https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test). If your test result is positive, follow the advice for people with COVID-19 to stay at home and start a further full 10 day isolation period. This begins when your symptoms started, regardless of where you are in your original 10 day isolation period. This means that your total isolation period will be longer than 10 days.

If other household members develop symptoms during this period, you do not need to isolate for longer than 10 days.

Visitors to the household

Do not invite or allow social visitors to enter your home, including friends and family. If you want to speak to someone who is not a member of your household, use the phone, email or social media.

If you or a family member receive essential care in your home, carers should continue to visit and follow the provision of home care guidance (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-home-care/coronavirus-covid-19-provision-of-home-care) to reduce the risk of infection.

All non-essential in-house services and repairs should be postponed until the self-isolation period is completed. Delivery drivers should not come into your home, so make sure you ask them to leave items outside for collection.

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.

Keeping your distance, washing your hands and good respiratory hygiene (using and disposing of tissues), cleaning surfaces and keeping indoor spaces well ventilated (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/coronavirus-how-to-stay-safe-and-help-prevent-the-spread) are the most important ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

People who have COVID-19 can infect others from around 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.

How to limit close contact with others in the household if you have COVID-19

Spend as little time as possible in shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas. Avoid using shared spaces such as kitchens and other living areas while others are present and take your meals back to your room to eat. Observe strict social distancing.

Ask the people you live with to help by bringing your meals to your door, helping with cleaning and by giving you space.

Use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household where possible. If a separate bathroom is not available, try and use the facilities last, before cleaning the bathroom using your usual cleaning products. The bathroom should be cleaned regularly.

You should use separate towels from other household members, both for drying yourself after bathing or showering and for drying your hands. Keep your room well-ventilated by opening a window to the outside.

Use 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 a surgical mask when spending time in shared areas inside your home to minimise the risk of spread to others. Used correctly, they may help to protect others by reducing the transmission of COVID-19 but they do not replace the need to limit your contact with other household members.

Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/19-july-guidance-on-protecting-people-who-are-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-from-covid-19) should be supported to minimise their contact with other people in the household during this period, regardless of whether others have symptoms or not.

Reducing the spread of COVID-19 in your household

GermDefence (https://www.germdefence.org/) is a website that can help you identify ways to protect yourself and others in your household from COVID-19. It provides scientifically proven advice on reducing the risks from COVID-19 and other viruses in your home.

GermDefence is easy to use and only takes 10 minutes to identify actions and make a plan on how to protect yourself. GermDefence (http://lang.germdefence.org/) is also available in a range of different languages.

Everyone should also take the following steps to reduce the spread of infection within their household.

Wash your hands

This is an important way to reduce the risk of catching COVID-19 or passing it on to others. Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose and before you eat or handle food. Clean your hands frequently and avoid touching your face.

Cover coughs and sneezes

Cover your mouth and nose with disposable tissues when you cough or sneeze. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow, not into your hand.

Dispose of tissues into a rubbish bag and immediately wash your hands. If you have a carer, they should use disposable tissues to wipe away any mucus or phlegm after you have sneezed or coughed and then wash or sanitise their hands.

Clean your home to reduce spread of infection

Regularly clean frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles and remote controls, and shared areas such as kitchens and bathrooms.

Use standard household cleaning products like detergents and bleach to clean your home as these are very effective at getting rid of the virus on surfaces. Clean shared bathrooms each time they are used, especially the surfaces you have touched, using your usual bathroom cleaning products.

Cleaning cloths and personal waste such as used tissues and disposable face coverings should be stored in disposable rubbish bags. These bags should be placed into another bag, tied securely and put aside for at least 72 hours before being put in your usual external household waste bin. Other household waste can be disposed of as normal.

Use a dishwasher to clean and dry your crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them by hand using washing up liquid and warm water and dry thoroughly using a separate tea towel.

Laundry

To reduce the possibility of spreading the virus through the air, do not shake dirty laundry. Wash items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. All dirty laundry can be washed in the same load. If you do not have a washing machine, wait a further 72 hours after your self-isolation has ended when you can then take the laundry to a public launderette.

Do not share towels, including hand towels and tea towels.

Ventilate indoor areas

Keep indoor areas well-ventilated (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing) with fresh air, especially shared living areas. To increase the flow of air you can:

- open windows as much as possible
- open doors
- make sure that any vents are open and airflow is not blocked
- leave extractor fans (for example in bathrooms) running for longer than usual with the door closed after use

Caring for pets

COVID-19 in the UK is spread between humans. There is limited evidence that some animals, including pets, can become infected with SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) following close contact with infected humans.

Pet owners who have COVID-19 or who are self-isolating with symptoms should restrict contact with pets and wash their hands thoroughly before and after interacting with their pet.

Looking after your health and wellbeing

Looking after your mental and physical wellbeing while staying at home

Staying at home and self-isolating 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 do not have much space or access to a garden.

Remember to take care of your mind as well as your body and get support if you need it.

Every Mind Matters (https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/) provides simple tips and advice to take better care of your mental health, including a COVID-19 hub with advice for those staying at home.

Many people find it helpful to remind themselves why what they are doing is so important. By staying at home, you are helping to protect your friends and family, other people in your community and the NHS.

Things that you can do to help make staying at home easier:

- keep in touch with friends and family over the phone or through social media
- remember that physical exercise can be good for your wellbeing. Look for online classes or courses that can help you take light exercise in your home
- plan ahead and think about what you will need to be able to stay at home for the full duration
- ask your employer, friends and family for help to access the things you will need while staying at home
- think about and plan how you can get food and other supplies, such as medication, that you will need during this period
- check if your neighbourhood or local community has a volunteer system that could help bring you supplies or provide other support
- ask friends or family to drop off anything you need or order supplies online or by phone, making sure these are left outside your home for you to collect
- think about things you can do during your time at home such as cooking, reading, online learning and watching films
- many people find it helpful to plan out the full 10 days. 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

If you need help for a mental health crisis, emergency or breakdown, seek immediate advice and assessment. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, urgent mental health support is available to adults and children around the clock. Find your local NHS helpline (https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/) by searching for your postcode or home town in a new service finder.

If you need medical advice

Health and care services remain open to help people with all health conditions, including COVID-19. Most people with COVID-19 will experience a mild illness which can be managed at home. Find out more about managing the symptoms of COVID-19 at home (https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/how-to-treat-symptoms-at-home/).

All routine medical and dental appointments should be cancelled while you are staying at home. If you are concerned or have been asked to attend in person during this time, discuss this with your medical contact first (for example, your GP or dentist, local hospital or outpatient service).

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness or the illness of someone in your household is worsening. If it is not an emergency, contact the NHS 111 online (https://111.nhs.uk/) COVID-19 service or NHS 111 for other health conditions. If you have no internet access, call NHS 111.

If it is a medical emergency and you need to call an ambulance, dial 999. Inform the call handler or operator that you or someone in your household has COVID-19 or symptoms if that is the case.

Financial or other practical support

Financial support

Self-isolation is one of the most important things we can do to help stop the spread of the virus and protect our friends and family, our community and the NHS. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, have received a positive test result, or have been told you are a contact with someone who has, self-isolation is the only way to guarantee you won't pass COVID-19 to others. If you are told to isolate, you should do so straight away. Find out what support you can get if you're affected by COVID-19 (https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support).

If you can, ask friends, family or neighbours to go out and get food and other essentials for you. If you do not have others to help you, there may be charities or community groups who can help in your area or your local shops, markets and wholesalers may offer a delivery service (by phone or by email).

The NHS Volunteer Responders programme is still available to help support those who need it. Volunteers can collect and deliver shopping, medication and other essential supplies and can also provide a regular friendly phone call. Call 0808 196 3646 between 8am and 8pm, 7 days a week to self-refer or visit NHS Volunteer Responders (https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/) for further information. There may also be other voluntary or community services in your local area that you can access for support.

If you are unable to work due to COVID-19, see guidance from the Department for Work and Pensions (https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/worker-support) to find out about support available to you. You may be entitled to a one-off payment of £500 through the NHS Test and Trace Support Payment scheme (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme) if you are required to stay at home and self-isolate. If you are the parent or guardian of a child who has been told to self-isolate, you may also be entitled to this support payment. You can apply for the NHS Test and Trace Support Payment online or through the NHS COVID-19 app (https://faq.covid19.nhs.uk/article/KA-01339/en-us).

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, including by the NHS COVID-19 app
- 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 (https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-local-help) for more information on the help and support that is available to you.

Additional support for those who lead a nomadic way of life

People who live on a traveller site, in a vehicle or on a canal boat may require additional support.

Let your site manager or local Gypsy and Traveller liaison team know if you need further support. If you are living on a river or canal, find out what advice is being offered by the organisation who manages the waterway you live on, as this varies for each one. Try to communicate by phone as much as possible to prevent spreading the virus to further contacts.

If you lack access to basic facilities such as water, sanitation and waste disposal to help with self-isolation, contact your local authority for assistance. They may be able to provide you with additional facilities or make alternative stopping places available.

The prevailing laws against unauthorised encampments (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dealing-with-illegal-and-unauthorised-encampments) or unauthorised development remain in place.

Waste should continue to be disposed of through authorised and legal means. Guidance for local authorities on re-opening or keeping household waste and recycling centres open is available (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-to-local-authorities-on-prioritising-waste-collections/managing-household-waste-and-recycling-centres-hwrcs-in-england-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic). If you need further advice, contact your local authority.

If you are stopping or cruising in rural or isolated areas, take note of your location if you moor or pull up, especially if you are feeling unwell. You can also use the what3words app (https://what3words.com/gelbes.beinen.freudige) if there is a medical emergency and you need services to come to you.

If you are breastfeeding

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, have tested positive or are living in a household with someone who has COVID-19, you may be concerned about the infection spreading to your baby if you are breastfeeding.

The benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of the virus through breast milk or by being in close contact, however, this will be an individual decision. Talk to your midwife, health visitor or GP by telephone.

There is currently no evidence to suggest that the COVID-19 virus can be transmitted through breast milk. However, COVID-19 infection can be passed on to a baby in the same way as it can to anyone in close contact with you. The current evidence is that children with COVID-19 get much less severe symptoms than adults. If you or a family member are feeding with formula or expressed milk, sterilise the equipment carefully before each use. You should not share bottles or a breast pump with someone else.

People with learning disabilities, autism or serious mental illnesses

Not all these measures will be possible if you, or those you live with, have conditions such as learning disabilities, autism or serious mental illnesses. Follow this guidance to the best of your ability, while keeping yourself and those close to you safe and well, ideally in line with any existing care plans.

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1. For the purposes of this guidance this includes Test and Trace contact tracers or call handlers, local authority contact tracers working with NHS Test and Trace, Public Health England health protection teams and NHS staff (for healthcare contacts)

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