Public Health England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

How to stop the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19)

March 2021

	Some rules on what you can and cannot do changed on 29 March.
	If you are reading this online you can find out more about what you can and cannot do by clicking here.

Protect yourself and others

	This guidance is for everyone.
	It is to help stop coronavirus spreading.

By following the guidance you will help look after yourself, your loved ones and people in the community.

Some people have coronavirus but don't have any symptoms.

You can still give coronavirus to others if you have no symptoms or just get a little bit poorly.

The main way coronavirus spreads is when someone who has coronavirus breathes, speaks, coughs or sneezes and another person breathes it in.
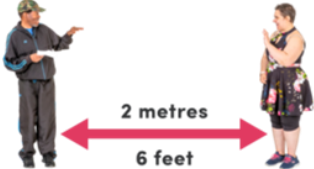
The virus can be spread by someone touching something that a person who has coronavirus has touched, breathed, coughed or sneezed on.

If you have coronavirus there is a chance you will spread the virus onto things like furniture, benches, or doorhandles even if you have not touched them.
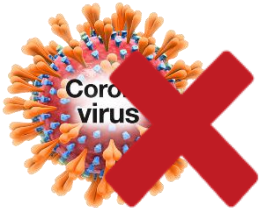
The next person who touches the object could then catch the virus.

	Even if you try to stay away from other people you might still catch the virus in this way. This is why you must follow all the steps in this guidance all the time even if you don't feel poorly. This is especially important if you live with someone who might get very poorly from coronavirus.

Keep a safe distance (social distancing)

	If you leave your home: • stay at least 2 metres away from people you do not live with or who are not in your support bubble • avoid crowded areas such as shops and supermarkets • try not to touch or talk face to face with people you do not live with If you live with someone who might get very poorly from coronavirus, try to stay 2 metres away from them even when you are at home.

	Stay at least 2 metres away from anyone who visits your home for work reasons such as a cleaner or a tradesperson doing urgent work.

Why keeping a safe distance is important

	Keeping apart from other people means you are less likely to catch coronavirus and give it to others.
	Coronavirus spreads through the air when someone who has it speaks, breathes, coughs or sneezes.
	The closer you are to a person with coronavirus (even if they don't have symptoms), the more chance you have of catching the virus.

Good hygiene

	No matter where you are or what you are doing, following the rules of good hygiene will help you keep yourself and others safe from coronavirus.

The rules of good hygiene are:

- washing your hands
- cleaning your surroundings
- covering your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze

Wash your hands

Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser (gel) lots of times during the day.

You should wash your hands after:

- coughing

- sneezing and blowing your nose

- before you eat or handle food

- touching things that may have been touched by lots of others like handles, handrails and light switches, and shared areas such as kitchens and bathrooms

If you must leave your home, wash your hands as soon as you return.

Try not to touch your eyes, nose and mouth. If you do, wash or sanitise your hands before and after.

Why hand washing is important
Hands touch many surfaces and can easily pick up viruses.

Once the virus is on your hands it can get in your body through your nose, eyes or mouth.

If you have coronavirus, you can pass the virus from your nose and mouth (when coughing or talking) to your hands and then you can spread it onto anything you touch.

Washing or sanitising your hands removes viruses and other germs, so you are less likely to become infected if you touch your face.

Using soap and water is the best way to clean your hands, especially if they look dirty.

Hand sanitiser can be used when soap and water is not available.

Clean your surroundings

Clean surfaces often with your usual cleaning products.

Pay close attention to surfaces that are touched lots, such as handles, light switches, work surfaces, remote controls and phones.

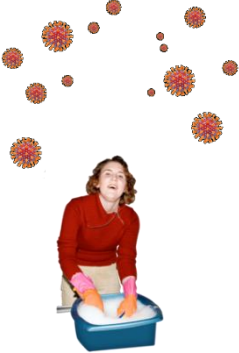Use cloths and mops you can throw away to clean floors, chairs, door handles and toilets.

Throw dirty cloths away with your usual rubbish.

If you are reading this online you can get more information on cleaning and waste disposal outside of your household by clicking here.

Why cleaning your surroundings is important

Coronavirus spreads through the air and when you touch something that has the virus on it.

Cleaning surfaces will get rid of lots of virus and cut back how much is spread.

The more you clean surfaces, the more chance you will remove any viruses before anyone else can touch them.

Cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze

Cover your mouth and nose with disposable tissues when you cough or sneeze.

If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow, not into your hand. Dispose of tissues into a rubbish bag and immediately wash your hands.

Why covering your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze is important

Coughing and sneezing sprays lots of virus into the air and it can stay there for a long time.

	A cough or sneeze of someone who has the virus which is not caught by a tissue stands a really big chance of infecting lots of people. By covering your nose and mouth you will catch lots of virus and stop it spreading. You can find more advice on reducing the risks from coronavirus in your home at GermDefence.

Face coverings

	There are some places where you must wear a face covering by law. Read the full list online here. You should also wear a face covering in indoor places where it is hard to keep away from others, and there are people you do not normally meet. Remember not everyone can wear a face covering so be understanding. **Why wearing a face covering is important** Coronavirus spreads through the air from the mouth or nose of someone who has the virus when they breathe, speak, cough or sneeze.

Scientists have done tests and found out that wearing a face covering cuts down the spread of coronavirus and keeps others safe.

A face covering may stop people who have the virus but have no symptoms from spreading it.

Face coverings are mostly to keep other people safe from catching coronavirus more than the person wearing it.

Let fresh air in (ventilation)

Make sure you let plenty of fresh air into your home by opening doors and windows even if it is just for a short amount of time.

If you have an extractor fan (for example in your bathroom or kitchen), leave it running for longer than usual with the door closed after someone has used the room.

If someone who lives in your house is staying at home and away from others (self-isolating), open a window in their room and keep the door closed so the virus can't spread to other parts of the house.

Leave windows open wide for a short time after someone working in your house (such as a cleaner) has left.

Opening windows for even a short time still helps to stop the virus spreading.

Wearing warm clothes or extra layers can help you to keep warm.

Why letting fresh air in is important

When a person infected with coronvirus coughs, talks or breathes, they spread the virus in the air which can be breathed in by another person.

Coronavirus can stay in the air for a long time in indoor places if there is no fresh air.

Opening doors and windows swaps shared air with fresh air from the outside.

The more fresh air there is the smaller the chance of breathing in the virus.

Get tested if you have symptoms

Why getting a test is important

It is important to know if you have coronavirus so that you stay at home, and do not make other people poorly.

Testing positive means you have the virus and anyone you may have given it to (people you have been close to) can be found by NHS Test and Trace and advised to self-isolate. This is an important way to stop the spread of coronavirus.

We do not know exactly how much the vaccine will stop people catching coronavirus so it is important that anyone with symptoms arranges a test, even if they have had the jab.

How to get a test

The most important symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- a high temperature

- a new cough where you keep on coughing. This means coughing a lot for more than an hour or coughing a lot more than usual 3 times in a day

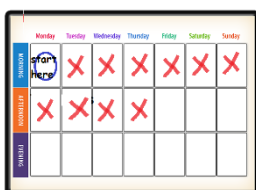- losing or there being a change to your sense of smell or taste

If you have any of these symptoms click get a free NHS test or call NHS 119 to book a free coronavirus test.

You should arrange a test even if you have been vaccinated against coronavirus or if you have had coronavirus before.

Do this online by clicking here.

If you do not have internet access phone **NHS 119**.

When to stay home and away from other people (self-isolate)

You must stay home and away from other people straight away if:

- you develop symptoms of coronavirus

- you test positive for coronavirus

Your staying home time includes the day your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you never felt poorly), and the next 10 full days.

Self-isolation means you must stay at home at all times and not see other people unless for example you need medical help.

You may have to ask others to do your shopping, and you may have to arrange to have someone else look after anyone you care for.

Do not invite visitors to your home or garden.

There is more guidance for those who have symptoms or have tested positive for coronavirus and live with someone who might get very poorly from coronavirus or who is over 70.

Why staying at home and away from other people is important

If you are told to self-isolate, it is because there is a high risk that you will spread coronavirus to others and make them poorly, even if you feel well and have no symptoms at all.

You must follow the guidance and stay home for the whole time.

If you test positive for coronavirus you must self-isolate straight away and for the next 10 full days because this is when the virus is most likely to be passed on to others.

Staying at home if you live with someone or have been close to someone who has coronavirus

If you live with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus or has symptoms you should stay at home for 10 days from the first day **they** started having symptoms or had their test.

If you have been close to a person who has tested positive for coronavirus who does not live in your house, your staying home time includes the date you were last close to them and the next 10 full days.

Self-isolation means you must stay at home at all times and not leave, except in very limited circumstances, for example to seek medical assistance.

Do not invite visitors to your home or garden.

There is more guidance on self-isolation and support available to those self-isolating.

	Why staying home if you live with or have been close to someone who has coronavirus is important
	You must stay home for 10 full days after you were close to the person because this is how long it might take for coronavirus to develop.

If you are told to self-isolate, it is because there is a high risk that you will spread coronavirus to others and make them poorly, even if you feel well and have no symptoms at all. |

Vaccination

	The NHS is offering COVID-19 vaccines to people most likely to get very poorly from coronavirus.

The vaccines have shown they cut the chance of people becoming very poorly but we do not know how much they stop the virus spreading.

Even if you have been vaccinated you could still spread the virus to others.

To help keep your friends, family and community safe keep following all of this guidance even if you have been vaccinated. |

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