

Coronavirus



A short guide

Information written with you in mind.

This information guide has been produced with the help of older people and carers as well as expert peer reviewers.

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We've all been asked to stay at home, and only go out for essentials like shopping and medicine. If we are considered 'extremely vulnerable', we must not leave the house at all (see page 7 for more information).

In these unsettling times, it can be reassuring to know you have some helpful numbers to hand, just in case you need them. We've left some space below for you to jot down some of the numbers that might come in handy over the coming weeks:

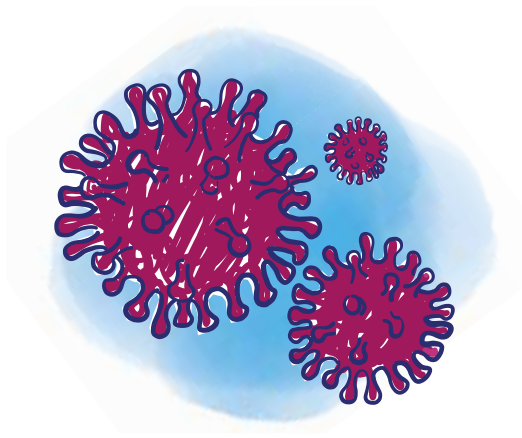
GP:

Local council:

Emergency contact:

Local Age UK:

Someone for a chat:



What this guide is about

These are uncertain times, and coronavirus (COVID-19) is affecting lives across the country. It's a new illness, so we don't understand everything about it yet. But we do know how to reduce the risk of catching the virus and spreading it to others.

This guide covers what those things are, and how you can continue to look after yourself and others.

It's important to stay up to date with the latest information and guidance, in case things change. You can do that here:

Health information

www.nhs.uk/coronavirus

Government guidance

www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Age UK website

www.ageuk.org.uk/coronavirus-info

Information about coronavirus

The Government's guidance and what we know about the virus is changing, so it's important to stay up to date with the latest advice. However, there are some things we know for certain.

What is coronavirus?

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a virus that affects your lungs and airways. It's very infectious, which means it can spread easily.

It passes from person to person much the same way as a cold or the flu – for example, when people cough or sneeze near to others or into their hands before touching surfaces others then come into contact with.

What are the symptoms?

For a lot of people the symptoms are mild, but for others they can be more serious and may even lead to hospital treatment.

The most common symptoms include:

- a new, continuous cough
- a high temperature.

What if I have symptoms?

If you have either of these symptoms, however mild, you need to stay at home for at least 7 days. Anyone you live with should also stay at home for 14 days, in case they develop symptoms.

You don't need to tell the NHS you're unwell, unless:

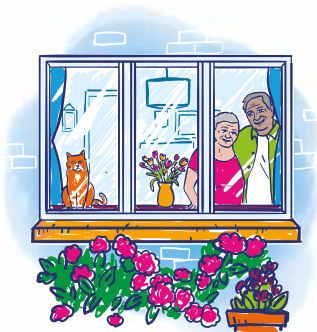
- you don't feel better after 7 days
- your symptoms are getting worse
- you can't cope with your symptoms at home.

Then you should call 111 – but do not go to your doctor's surgery or hospital.

If you've been identified as 'extremely vulnerable' and contacted by the NHS you should contact 111 as soon as you show symptoms. Anyone should call 999 in an emergency.

What should I be doing?

There are lots of new phrases being used to describe what we should be doing. It can get a little confusing, so we've put together this table that helps explain what these terms mean and what you should do.



What does it mean?

Who has to do it?

Social distancing

It's staying at home and only leaving for the limited reasons defined by the Government. When you're outside of your home you should stay at least two metres away from other people.

Everyone should be doing it – but the Government has said it's particularly important for people over the age of 70 or with existing health conditions.

Self-isolation

It's avoiding contact with others (even those you live with) and not leaving your home for any reason.

Anyone displaying symptoms for 7 days. It's 14 days for those living with someone displaying symptoms.

Shielding

It's a type of self-isolation, which involves not leaving your home for any reason for at least 12 weeks to reduce your risk of contracting coronavirus.

Anyone considered 'extremely vulnerable' – those in the groups outlined on page 7.

Who's considered 'vulnerable' or 'at risk'?

Some people are more likely to need hospital treatment.

They include:

- people aged over 70, even if you're otherwise fit and well
- people of any age living with long-term health conditions, which means you'd normally be offered the flu jab.

Who's considered 'extremely vulnerable'?

Certain people are more at risk of being seriously affected by coronavirus and are considered 'extremely vulnerable'.

They include:

- people with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD
- people on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection
- people with specific cancers or receiving cancer treatment.

There are more groups in this list, so please visit the NHS website for more information (page 18).

If you're 'extremely vulnerable' and shielding yourself for 12 weeks, essential carers (including family) and healthcare professionals can still come into your home, but should follow protective hygiene measures.

Good to know

If you're considered 'extremely vulnerable' you should receive a letter from the NHS with information about additional support to help you self-isolate for at least 12 weeks. We encourage everyone that receives a letter to register for the additional support, even if you feel well supported at home. If you haven't received a letter but think you should have, contact your GP or specialist and let them know.

How do I reduce my risk of catching coronavirus?

To reduce the risk of you – and those around you – catching coronavirus, make sure you follow these simple tips:



DO: Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds. Do this after you've been outside, before eating or handling food and after sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose.



DON'T: Touch your eyes, nose or mouth unless your hands are clean.



DO: Make sure you catch coughs or sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve – not your hands – and put used tissues in the bin.



DON'T: Leave your home, except for the following reasons and only if you're not shielding or self-isolating.



1. To go shopping for essentials, such as food and medicine.
2. To go out alone or with someone you live with to exercise once a day.
3. If you have a medical need or are giving care or support to a vulnerable person (this includes volunteering to help people in your community with essential tasks).
4. To travel to and from work, but only if you absolutely can't work from home.



Staying safe and well at home

The thought of not being able to go out and about, see friends and family and go about your day-to-day life as normal can be unsettling.

You might be anxious about the thought of staying indoors and not sure what you're going to do. That's perfectly natural. But it's more important than ever to look after yourself, physically and mentally, and we've got some suggestions for how you can do this.

Stay connected

Just because you can't see people face to face, that doesn't mean you can't call them for a chat or send them an email or message online.



If you have a mobile phone or computer, now's a great time to make the most of video calls and messages. Why not give it a go, even if you're not a dab hand with technology? Skype, Whatsapp and Facetime all let you make video calls.

Maintain your routines

As much as you can, it's a good idea to keep doing what you did before. Not only does routine help us stay in control, but it's also a comfort to keep doing the things we're used to.



You might have to adapt your routine a bit, or even come up with a new one entirely. But there are plenty of things you can still do. It might also be the perfect time to take up a new hobby.

Be as active as you can

If you can't get out and about, it can be easy to find yourself sitting down more than usual. But there are ways you can still stay active at home or in the garden, such as chair exercises (there are plenty of these online) or even dancing around the living room to your favourite song.



What each person can or can't do will differ, but what's important is to do what you can.

Look after your health

Still try to eat and drink the right things. It can be a little trickier in terms of shopping, but do what you can to eat well.

Avoid drinking too much or smoking and get some fresh air whenever you can, even if it's just popping your head out of the window.



It's also a good opportunity to make the most of getting a good rest and maintaining a healthy sleeping pattern.

Talk about how you're feeling

With everything going on, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed. You might have days where you cope with it better than others. That's OK and perfectly natural. You won't be alone in feeling that way, and it's important to talk about it.



Let people know how you're feeling, and focus on the things you can control.

Also, while it's important to stay on top of the latest advice, if the news is making you anxious, choose a set time in the morning and/or evening to catch up with what's going on from trusted sources, rather than watch it continually throughout the day.

Think about scams

Unfortunately, while lots of people are offering their help and support, some are taking advantage of everything going on.



If someone you don't know offers help, you don't have to accept it if you think it might not be genuine.

If someone claims to be from a recognised organisation, don't be afraid to ask for proof and never hand over money to someone you don't know.

If you're worried about someone else

We know lots of people are concerned about their family, friends and neighbours and wondering how they can best support them over the coming weeks and months. Here are some top tips.



Don't visit them – unless they rely on you for care

It can be so tempting to pop over and see if they're OK, but you mustn't unless they rely on you for care or essential supplies. Leave any supplies on the doorstep.



Check in on them and call for a chat

If you do have a loved one or neighbour you're worried about, why not give them a ring? Not only can you check in to see if they're OK, but you can have a chat and provide some company in a safe way.



Think about a plan B

If the person you're worried about relies on carers or you are their carer, it's worth thinking about a plan B in case there are any problems with their care. Talk to them about whether there are family members, friends or trusted neighbours who could step in if necessary or encourage them to speak to their care provider.



Check they have everything they need

While people are staying at home, it's really important they have enough food and any essential supplies they need, such as medications. Check in to see if you can help out arranging this. Maybe you could contact a local group offering support or you could do an online shop for them.

We're in this together

Age UK is determined to be there for older people and their families throughout the coronavirus crisis.

-  We're giving expert advice and guidance through our free advice line and information guides, like this one.
-  We're offering a listening ear when people need it most through our crucial telephone befriending services.
-  We're providing funding to more than 130 local Age UKs, so they can support their local communities.

To help us respond to the growing demand for our services, we've launched an emergency appeal to raise £10 million.

This will make it possible for us to run our vital services and help more people who really need us in these unprecedented times.

If you'd like to donate you can online or on the phone:

To donate online please visit **www.ageuk.org.uk/donation**

To donate over the phone please call **0800 077 8751 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)** – but please be aware we're currently experiencing unprecedented call volumes.

Although it is Age UK's aim to raise at least £10 million, if this target cannot be met the funds raised during this emergency appeal will still be disbursed for the purposes listed in this appeal; wherever the need is greatest.

If we find that the needs of older people change during this emergency or we raise more than £10 million we will apply any money raised to where the needs are greatest.

Age UK is a registered charity, registered charity no 1128267. Age UK will be raising funds on behalf of itself and local Age UKs who are also registered charities and The Silver Line Help Line which is also a charity.

Useful organisations

Age UK

We provide advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK Advice line, publications and website.

In England, contact Age UK Advice: **0800 169 65 65**
www.ageuk.org.uk

In Wales, contact Age Cymru: **0800 022 3444**
www.agecymru.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact Age NI: **0808 808 7575**
www.ageni.org

In Scotland, contact Age Scotland: **0800 124 4222**
www.agescotland.org.uk

Alzheimer's Society

Offers advice, information and support in England and Wales to people with dementia, their families and carers through its helpline and local branches.

Tel: **0300 222 1122**
www.alzheimers.org.uk
www.alzheimers.org.uk/wales

In Northern Ireland, contact Alzheimer's NI Helpline:
028 9066 4100
www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-us/northern-ireland

For coronavirus guidance:
www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/coronavirus-covid-19

Asthma UK

Offers information and advice to help people manage their daily lives with asthma.

Tel: **0300 222 5800**

www.asthma.org.uk

For coronavirus guidance:

www.asthma.org.uk/advice/triggers/coronavirus-covid-19

Bloodwise

Provides information and support for anyone affected by blood cancer.

Tel: **0808 2080 888**

www.bloodwise.org.uk

For coronavirus guidance:

www.bloodwise.org.uk/coronavirus

British Heart Foundation

Provides information and support for people with heart disease.

Tel: **0300 330 3311**

www.bhf.org.uk

For coronavirus guidance:

www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/news/coronavirus-and-your-health

British Lung Foundation

Offers advice, information and support to people affected by lung disease, their families and carers.

Tel: **03000 030 555**

www.blf.org.uk

For coronavirus guidance:

www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/coronavirus

Carers UK

Provides information and support for carers.

Tel: **0808 808 7777**

www.carersuk.org

For coronavirus guidance for carers:

www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/looking-after-your-health/coronavirus-covid-19

Diabetes UK

Provides information, support and services to help people manage their diabetes.

Tel: **0345 123 2399**

www.diabetes.org.uk

For coronavirus guidance:

www.diabetes.org.uk/about_us/news/coronavirus

GOV.UK

The official Government website providing information on public services, benefits, jobs, the environment, pensions and health services.

www.gov.uk

For the latest coronavirus information and guidance:

www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Kidney Care UK

Provides practical, financial and emotional advice and support to kidney patients.

Tel: **01420 541 424**

www.kidneycareuk.org

For coronavirus guidance:

www.kidneycareuk.org/news-and-campaigns/coronavirus-advice

Macmillan Cancer Support

Provides practical, medical and financial support for people facing cancer, their carers and loved ones.

Tel: **0808 808 0000**

www.macmillan.org.uk

For coronavirus guidance:

www.macmillan.org.uk/coronavirus/cancer-and-coronavirus

Mind

Provides advice and support on mental health issues.

Tel: **0300 123 3393**

www.mind.org.uk

For coronavirus guidance:

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing

NHS

For the latest health advice and guidance for all conditions, including coronavirus.

Tel: **111**

www.nhs.uk

For the latest coronavirus guidance:

www.nhs.uk/coronavirus

For tips on what you can do to take care of your mental wellbeing over the coming weeks at home.

www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips

In Wales, visit NHS Direct Wales

Tel: **0845 4647** or **111**

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

In Scotland, visit NHS Inform
Tel: **0800 22 44 88**
www.nhsinform.scot

In Northern Ireland, contact NI Direct
www.nidirect.gov.uk

Stroke Association

Provides information, support and local services to people affected by stroke.

Tel: **0303 303 3100**
www.stroke.org.uk

For coronavirus guidance:
www.stroke.org.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-information-people-affected-stroke

Versus Arthritis

Provides information and support to people with arthritis.

Tel: **0800 5200 520**
www.versusarthritis.org

For coronavirus guidance:
www.versusarthritis.org/news/2020/march/coronavirus-covid-19-what-is-it-and-where-to-go-for-information

What should I do now?

Age UK has lots of other information guides and factsheets on a range of topics. You can visit **www.ageuk.org.uk/publications** to find a full list.

You can order any of our guides or factsheets by giving our Advice Line a ring for free on **0800 169 65 65** (8am-7pm, 365 days a year).

Our friendly advisers will also be able to help answer any questions you have about anything you've read.

All of our publications are available in large print and audio formats.

There's plenty of really useful information on our website, too. Visit **www.ageuk.org.uk/coronavirus-info** to get started.



0800 169 65 65
www.ageuk.org.uk



If contact details for your local Age UK are not in the below box, call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65**.



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