

Coronavirus (COVID-19) (/coronavirus)

Latest updates and guidance

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 3. [COVID-19: people with COVID-19 and their contacts \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-people-with-covid-19-and-their-contacts\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-people-with-covid-19-and-their-contacts)
- [UK Health Security Agency \(https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency\)](#)

Guidance

COVID-19: people with COVID-19 and their contacts

Published 24 February 2022

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This guidance came into effect on 24 February 2022 and will be updated on 1 April 2022.

Who this guidance is for

There is no longer a legal requirement for people with coronavirus (COVID-19) infection to self-isolate, however if you have any of the main symptoms of COVID-19 or a positive test result, the public health advice is to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.

The following advice is for:

- people with any of the main symptoms of COVID-19
- people who have received a positive COVID-19 lateral flow device (LFD) or polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test result
- people who live in the same household as, or who have had close contact with, someone who has COVID-19

This also applies to children and young people who usually attend an education or childcare setting, with [additional information available for these settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>).

There is separate guidance for those [working in health and social care settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings>).

This guidance applies in England.

Know the symptoms of COVID-19

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are a 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)

If you have any of these symptoms you [should order a PCR test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) (<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>). You are advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people while you are waiting for the test result.

There is [additional guidance](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/who-is-at-high-risk-from-coronavirus/) (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/who-is-at-high-risk-from-coronavirus/>) for people who have been informed by the NHS that they are at highest risk of becoming severely unwell and who might be eligible for new COVID-19 treatments.

Other symptoms linked with COVID-19 include shortness of breath, fatigue, loss of appetite, muscle ache, sore throat, headache, stuffy or runny nose, diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting. Any of these symptoms may also have another cause.

If you are concerned about your symptoms, or they are worsening, contact 111 or speak to your GP. In an emergency dial 999.

Most children and young people with COVID-19 experience a mild illness or do not have any symptoms at all. Children who have symptoms of COVID-19 are more likely to pass the virus onto others than those who do not.

It is still possible to catch and spread COVID-19, even if you are fully vaccinated. For most people, especially if they have been vaccinated, COVID-19 will be a relatively mild illness. However, COVID-19 can still be a very serious infection and for [some people the risk of becoming severely unwell is higher](#).

In some cases, COVID-19 can cause symptoms that last for weeks or months after the infection has gone. People who have had a mild illness can still have long-term problems.

What to do if you have COVID-19

The most effective way to avoid passing on COVID-19 infection is to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.

When someone with COVID-19 breathes, speaks, coughs or sneezes, they release small particles (droplets and aerosols) that contain the virus that causes COVID-19. These particles can come into contact with the eyes, nose or mouth or can be breathed in by another person. The particles can also land on surfaces and be passed from person to person via touch.

The risk of catching or passing on COVID-19 can be higher in certain places and when doing certain activities such as singing or vigorous exercise. In general, the risk of catching or passing on COVID-19 is highest when you are physically close to someone who is infected.

However, it is possible to be infected even by someone you do not have close contact with, especially if you are in a crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated space. This is because the infectious particles can stay suspended in the air for some time.

People at higher risk of becoming severely unwell if they are infected with COVID-19

COVID-19 can make anyone seriously unwell but for some people the risk is higher. For most of these people, this risk is significantly reduced by vaccination. The risk of becoming seriously unwell from COVID-19 is very low for children and young people.

People who are known to be at higher risk from COVID-19 include:

- older people
- those who are pregnant
- those who are unvaccinated
- people of any age who have a [severely weakened immune system](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk>)
- people of any age with [certain long-term conditions](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/who-is-at-high-risk-from-coronavirus/) (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/who-is-at-high-risk-from-coronavirus/>)

You will not always know whether someone you come into contact with outside your home is at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell. They could be strangers (for example people you sit next to on public transport) or people you may have regular contact with (for example friends and work colleagues). This means it is important to follow the advice in this guidance to keep others safe.

If you have COVID-19, stay at home and avoid contact with other people

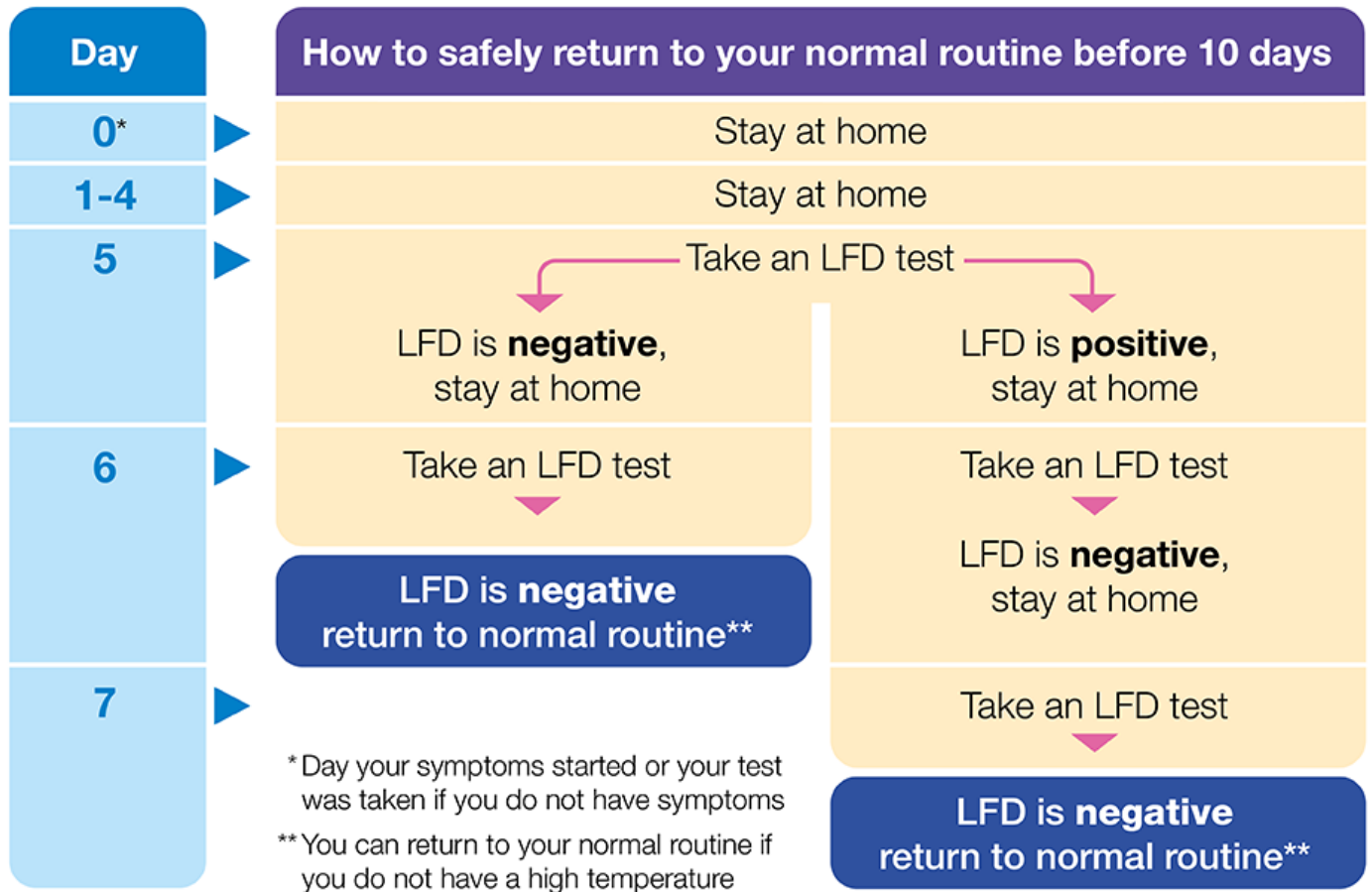
If you have COVID-19 you can infect other people from 2 days before your symptoms start, and for up to 10 days after. You can pass on the infection to others, even if you have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. If you have COVID-19 you should stay at home and avoid contact with other people.

You should:

- not attend work. If you are unable to work from home, you should talk to your employer about options available to you. You may be eligible for [Statutory Sick Pay](https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay) (<https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>)
- ask friends, family, neighbours or [volunteers](#) to get food and other essentials for you
- not invite social visitors into your home, including friends and family
- postpone all non-essential services and repairs that require a home visit
- cancel routine medical and dental appointments. If you are concerned about your health or you have been asked to attend an appointment in person during this time, discuss this with your medical contact and let them know about your symptoms or your test result
- if you can, let people who you have been in close contact with know about your positive test result so that they can follow this guidance

Many people will no longer be infectious to others after 5 days. You may choose to take an [LFD](#) test from 5 days after your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you did not have symptoms) followed by another [LFD](#) test the next day. If both these test results are negative, and you do not have a high temperature, the risk that you are still infectious is much lower and you can safely return to your normal routine.

How to safely return to your normal routine before 10 days



If your day 5 LFD test result is positive, you can continue taking LFD tests until you receive 2 consecutive negative test results.

Children and young people with COVID-19 should not attend their education setting while they are infectious. They should take an LFD test from 5 days after their symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms) followed by another one the next day. If both these tests results are negative, they should return to their educational setting if they normally attend one, as long as they feel well enough to do so and do not have a temperature. They should follow the guidance for their educational setting.

Avoid meeting people at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell from COVID-19, especially those with a severely weakened immune system, for the 10 days after your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you did not have symptoms).

While you are infectious there is a high risk of passing on COVID-19 to others in your household. These are simple things you can do to help prevent the spread:

- keep your distance from other people you live with and spend as little time as possible in shared areas such as kitchens and living rooms. This is particularly important if someone you live with is unvaccinated or at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell from COVID-19, especially those with a [severely weakened immune system](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk)
- if you need to spend time in shared areas wear a well-fitting [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) made with multiple layers or a surgical face mask. Ventilate the room by opening windows and leaving them open for at least 10 minutes after you have left the room. Leave extractor fans running for longer than usual with the door closed after use
- cover your mouth and nose with disposable tissues when you cough or sneeze. Dispose of tissues into a rubbish bag and immediately wash your hands or use hand sanitiser
- wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose and before you eat or handle food. Avoid touching your face
- if you can, use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household. If this is not possible try and use the bathroom after everyone else
- regularly clean frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles and remote controls, and shared areas such as kitchens and bathrooms

[GermDefence](https://www.germdefence.org/) is a useful 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.

If you need to leave your home

The most effective way to avoid passing on COVID-19 infection is to stay at home and avoid contact with other people. We understand that this is not always possible, but you should follow the guidance as closely as possible.

If you have COVID-19 and you need to leave your home while you are still infectious, you should take the following steps to reduce the chance of passing on the infection to others:

- wear a well-fitting [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) (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) made with multiple layers or a surgical face mask
- avoid close contact with anyone you know who is at higher risk of becoming severely unwell if they are infected with COVID-19, especially those with a [severely weakened immune system](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk) (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk)
- avoid crowded places. If you need to take public transport, avoid busy times, for example by using off peak services
- avoid large social gatherings and events, or anywhere that is poorly ventilated, crowded, or enclosed
- limit close contact with other people outside your household as much as possible. Meet outside and try and stay at least 2 metres apart from them
- take any exercise outdoors in places where you will not have contact with other people
- be especially careful with your hand and respiratory hygiene

What to do if you are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19

People who live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 are at the highest risk of becoming infected because they are most likely to have prolonged close contact. People who stayed overnight in the household of someone with COVID-19 [while they were infectious](#) are also at high risk.

If you live with, or have stayed overnight in the household of, someone who has COVID-19, you are advised to:

- minimise contact with the person who has COVID-19
- work from home if you are able to do so
- avoid contact with anyone you know who is at [higher risk of becoming severely unwell](#) if they are infected with COVID-19, especially those with a [severely weakened immune system](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk) (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk)
- limit close contact with other people outside your household, especially in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces
- wear a well-fitting [face covering](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own) (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own) made with multiple layers or a surgical face mask in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces and where you are in close contact with other people
- pay close attention to the [main symptoms of COVID-19](#). If you develop any of these symptoms, [order a PCR test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) (https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test). You are advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people while you are waiting for your test result

Follow this advice for 10 days after the day the person you live or stayed with symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms).

Children and young people who usually attend an education or childcare setting and who live with someone who has COVID-19 should continue to attend the setting as normal.

If you are a contact of someone with COVID-19 but do not live with them or did not stay in their household overnight, you are at lower risk of becoming infected. Carefully follow the guidance on [Coronavirus: how to stay safe and help prevent the spread](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do) (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do).

Wellbeing and practical support while you are staying at home

Staying at home and avoiding contact with other people can be difficult, frustrating and lonely for some people. 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/) (https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/) provides simple tips and advice to take better care of your mental health.

The [NHS Volunteer Responders programme](https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/) (https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/) 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 for further information.

There may also be other voluntary or community services in your local area that you can access for support.

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