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Guidance

Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do

Updated 5 June 2020

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The government has set out its plan to return life to as near normal as we can, for as many people as we can, as quickly and fairly as possible in order to safeguard livelihoods, but in a way that is safe and continues to protect our NHS.

The government has published guidance on staying safe outside your home (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home) and guidance on social distancing rules (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home/staying-safe-outside-your-home). This page sets out key FAQs to help you prepare for these changes.

This guidance applies in England – people in Scotland (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-individuals-and-businesses-in-scotland), Wales (https://gov.wales/coronavirus) and Northern Ireland (https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19) should follow the specific rules in those parts of the UK.

1. Gatherings, public spaces, and outdoor activities

1.1 What can I do that I couldn't do before?

There are a limited number of additional things you can do in England that you could not do before:

- spend time outdoors, including private gardens and other outdoor spaces, in groups of up to six people from different households, following social distancing guidelines
- · visit car showrooms and outdoor markets
- in line with the arrangements made by your school, send your child to school or nursery if they are in early years, reception, year 1 or year 6, if you could not before
- if you are an elite athlete as defined by this guidance (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/elite-sport-return-to-training-guidance-step-one--2), train and compete using the specified gyms, pools and sports facilities you need which will enable others to watch live sport on TV

At all times, you should continue to adhere to strict social distancing guidelines when you are outside your home, particularly ensuring you are two metres away from anyone outside your household.

You cannot:

- · visit friends and family inside their homes
- stay overnight away from your own home, except for in a limited set of circumstances, such as for work purposes
- exercise in an indoor sports court, gym or leisure centre, or go swimming in a public pool
- use an outdoor gym or playground
- gather outdoors in a group of more than six (excluding members of your own household)

1.2 I don't have to stay at home anymore?

You should continue to stay alert and limit your contact with others. Staying at home is the easiest way to do this.

However, you can spend time outdoors and meet in groups of up to six. You should stay alert and always practise social distancing with people from outside of your household keeping 2 metres apart.

The more people you have interactions with, the more chance the virus has to spread. Therefore, try to limit the number of people you see - especially over short periods of time.

If you are showing coronavirus symptoms, or if you or any of your household are self-isolating, for example if you have been contacted as part of the test and trace (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works#the-nhs-coronavirus-app) programme, you should stay at home

(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection) - this is critical to staying safe and saving lives.

1.3 What else is a criminal offence?

It is a criminal offence to:

- incite others to break the rules by e.g. inviting people to a party
- threaten others with infection by coronavirus, for example by coughing or spitting in their direction

1.4 Can I meet people outdoors if I also have a carer from another household?

Yes, you can meet in a group of up to six people, including you and any carers, but it remains important to practise strict social distancing. Everyone should observe the same guidelines, keeping 2 metres apart. But where you need personal care from your usual carer this may involve being closer than 2 metres.

1.5 Can I meet my friends and family in the park?

You can meet in a group of up to six people, including children, if you are outdoors. You should ensure you stay at least 2 metres away from the people you do not live with. Public gatherings of more than six people from different households are prohibited in law. There is no limit to the size of a gathering in an outdoor space if you are all members of the same household.

Try to limit the number of people you see - especially over short periods of time - and be sure to stay 2 metres apart when you do.

1.6 If I can socially distance, can I play sport with someone I don't live with? What about tennis / croquet / cricket / Frisbee?

You can exercise or play sport in groups of up to six people from other households, but should only do so where it is possible to maintain a 2 metre gap from those you do not live with.

People who play team sports can meet to train together and do things like conditioning or fitness sessions but they must be in separate groups of no more than six and must be 2 metres apart at all times. While groups could practice ball skills like passing and kicking, equipment sharing should be kept to a minimum and strong hand hygiene practices should be in place before and after. You can also play doubles tennis with people from outside of your household as long as you remain 2 metres apart as far as possible. Any equipment that is used should be cleaned frequently. Cleaning should be particularly thorough if it is to be used by someone else.

And if you are showing coronavirus symptoms, or if you or any of your household are self-isolating, you should stay at home - this is critical to staying safe and saving lives.

1.7 Can I sit in someone's back garden?

Yes, you can spend time in gardens and other private outdoor spaces such as yards or roof terraces in a group of up to six people from different households – as long as you maintain social distancing at all times with people outside your household.

You should not go indoors unless you need the toilet or are passing through to access the garden. Avoid touching surfaces and if you use the toilet wash your hands thoroughly, wipe down surfaces, use separate or paper towels and wash or dispose of them safely after use.

If you no longer want to remain outdoors, you should go home. Don't go into garages, sheds or cabins – these are all indoor areas and where the risk of transmission is higher.

1.8 Can I use garden equipment like tables and chairs? What about a climbing frame or paddling pool?

You should not be sharing garden equipment with people outside of your household because of the risk of transmission. You could bring your own or if you have to use chairs, for example, you should wipe them down carefully with household cleaner before and after use.

You should try to avoid shared equipment, for example you should use your own tennis racquet, golf club or basketball. Any equipment that is used should be cleaned frequently. Cleaning should be particularly thorough if it is to be used by someone else.

You should avoid using paddling pools and private swimming pools with people outside of your household.

1.9 Can I share food and drink, including having a picnic or a barbeque in an outdoor space?

Yes but stay alert. You should not pass each other food or drink unless you live together. You should not use plates or utensils that someone from another house has touched - either bring your own or ensure you have thoroughly cleaned them before using. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly for at least 20 seconds and use disposable towels if possible.

If you are in someone else's garden, you must not go inside to help the host carry the food out or to help with the washing up.

1.10 When will I be able to invite others into my home?

Right now, you are only allowed to meet people you do not live with outdoors. The risk of transmission is much less from seeing people outside, while obeying the '2 metre rule', compared to inside. We recognise how difficult this is for people – particularly those who live alone and we are keeping this under constant review.

1.11 Can I visit a clinically vulnerable person?

We know that people 70 and over, those with certain underlying conditions and pregnant women are more clinically vulnerable, so we have advised them to take particular care to avoid contact with others.

That means you can see them outdoors but be especially careful. You can visit a clinically vulnerable person inside if you are providing care or assistance to them, following the advice set out here (https://www.gov.uk/volunteering/coronavirus-volunteering). You should not do so if you have coronavirus symptoms, however mild.

Wherever possible, you should stay at least 2 metres away from others, use a tissue when sneezing and dispose of it safely, cough into the crook of your elbow and wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser if washing facilities are not easily available.

If someone is defined as clinically extremely vulnerable and being asked to shield, you should follow the guidance for a shielded person (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19) as this is different to the wider clinically vulnerable group.

1.12 Are there restrictions on how far I can travel for my exercise or outdoor activity?

No. You can travel to outdoor open space irrespective of distance, as long as you can return the same night and do not put others at risk because of services you may need in the time you are away. You should continue to avoid using public transport and should cycle, walk or drive wherever possible.

If visiting other parts of the UK – Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – you must adhere to the laws and guidance of the devolved administrations at all times.

You shouldn't travel with someone from outside your household unless you can practise social distancing - for example by cycling.

1.13 Can I use public transport if I'm seeing friends in a park or going to my parents' garden?

You should avoid using public transport if you can. You should cycle, walk or drive wherever possible. Consider all other forms of transport before using public transport. If you need to use public transport, use should follow the safer travel guidance for passengers (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#public-transport).

1.14 Can I share a private vehicle with someone from another household?

You should avoid sharing a private vehicle with members of another household as you will not be able to keep strict social distancing guidelines. The Department for Transport has provided specific guidance on using private vehicles. Please see their guidance on Private cars and other vehicles (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#private-cars-and-other-vehicles) for more information on car sharing and traveling with people outside your household group.

1.15 Are day trips and holidays ok? Can people stay in second homes?

Day trips to outdoor open space are permitted as long as you can return the same night. You should make sure you do not put others at risk because of services you may need in the time you are away. You should practise social distancing from other people outside your household. You should continue to avoid using public transport if you can. Consider all other forms of transport before using public transport. If you need to use public transport, you should follow the safer travel guidance for passengers (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#public-transport).

You are not permitted to stay overnight away from the place where you are living for a holiday or similar purpose. This includes staying overnight in a second home. If your work requires you to stay away from home you can do but should continue to practise social distancing.

Premises such as hotels and bed and breakfasts will remain closed, except where providing accommodation for specific reasons set out in law, such as for critical workers where required for a reason relating to their work. Hotels are also available to host those self-isolating after arriving in the UK (where no other accommodation is available).

1.16 Can students return to their family home if they've been in halls all this time?

The general rule is that staying overnight somewhere that is not your home - the place you live - is not allowed.

If a student is opting to change their primary residence for the purpose of the emergency period to live back at their family home, this is permitted.

1.17 Will public toilets reopen?

Councils are responsible for public toilets and this decision is up to them. You should avoid using the public toilet where possible. If you need to use any of these facilities, you should practise social distancing and good hygiene (i.e. washing your hands thoroughly).

1.18 Can I visit outdoor tourist sites? What about indoor ones?

Yes, you can still travel to outdoor areas, such as National Parks or beaches. Some venues are not allowed to be open so it is advisable to check ahead to ensure the venue is open to visitors.

Indoor sites and some outdoor attractions are still not allowed to re-open.

1.19 Is there a limit on the number of people attending funerals?

The guidance (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic) on the number of people attending funerals has not changed.

1.20 Can weddings go ahead?

No, there's no change at this time - you cannot gather in sufficient numbers indoors to enable a wedding ceremony. We understand the frustration couples planning a wedding must be feeling at this time. We are keeping these restrictions under review and will ease them as soon as it is safe to do so. We will continue to work closely with faith leaders and local government over the coming weeks to go through the practicalities of doing so.

Marriages and civil partnerships under the special procedure for those who are seriously ill and not expected to recover, are taking place in some cases where it is safe to do so in line with PHE guidance.

1.21 Can I pray in a place of worship?

No, it is not possible to pray in a church, mosque, synagogue, temple or other place of worship. We will continue to review when it might be safe to ease restrictions on places of worship, including for private prayer.

1.22 Can I register the birth of my child?

You are permitted to register the birth of your child. You should check whether your local register office (https://www.gov.uk/register-offices) is open. The office will also be able to advise you on appointment availability.

2. Vulnerable groups, shielding, 70 year olds and over, and care homes

2.1 Does easing restrictions apply to healthy 70 year olds and over?

The advice for those aged 70 and over continues to be that they should take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household.

If they do go out more frequently, they should be careful to maintain distance from others. They and everyone should continue to comply with any general social distancing restrictions.

We know that those aged 70 and over can be absolutely fit and healthy and it's not the case that everybody over 70 has a chronic health condition or an underlying disease.

But unfortunately, we also know that as you get older, there is a higher risk of coronavirus having a more serious impact with infection. Complications and deaths are more common in the elderly, even those without pre-existing conditions.

2.2 How long will shielding be in place?

We've advised individuals with very specific medical conditions to shield until the end of June and to do everything they can to stay at home. Those shielding may wish to consider spending time outdoors once a day. This can be with members of their own household or, for those shielding alone, with one person from another

household. We can safely give this advice because the risk of transmission is much lower outdoors.

If individuals wish to spend time outdoors, they should take extra care to minimise contact with others by keeping 2 metres apart at all times. This is because we believe they are likely to be at the greatest risk of serious complications from coronavirus.

We know this is challenging guidance to follow, which is why we have a support scheme in place to provide help with access to food and basic supplies, care, medicines and social support.

We are keeping the guidance to shielded people (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19) under review.

2.3 What safety standards will need to be put in place in care homes?

We have issued detailed guidance about infection control and staff safety in care homes (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/881329/COVID-19_How_to_work_safely_in_care_homes.pdf) to help admit and care for residents safely and protect care home staff.

This includes isolation procedures, PPE and infection control training for all staff, cleaning and how to provide personal care safely.

As with all of our advice, this guidance is kept under constant review and updated frequently, in line with the latest scientific evidence.

3. Going to work / Safer spaces

3.1 Who is allowed to go to work?

In the first instance, employers should make every effort to support working from home, including by providing suitable IT and equipment as they have been already. This will apply to many different types of businesses, particularly those who typically would have worked in offices or online.

Where work can only be done in the workplace, we have set out tailored guidelines for employers to help protect their workforce and customers from coronavirus while still continuing to trade or getting their business back up and running. We have published detailed COVID-19 secure guidelines (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19), which has been developed in consultation with businesses and trades unions.

These COVID-19 Secure guidelines apply to those in essential retail like:

- supermarkets
- · those in construction and manufacturing
- those working in labs and research facilities
- those administering takeaways and deliveries at restaurants and cafes
- tradesmen, cleaners and others who work in people's homes
- those who are facilitating trade or transport goods

Non-essential retail, restaurants, pubs, bars, gyms and leisure centres will remain closed. They will reopen in a phased manner provided it is safe for everyone for them to do so they are able to meet the COVID-19 Secure guidelines to protect consumers and workers and - the Government has announced its intention to reopen non-essential retail from 15 June, but only provided the five tests are still being met and shops have been made COVID-19 Secure.

There are specific guidelines for those who are vulnerable, shielding, or showing symptoms that should be observed when considering whether to go back to work.

3.2 What is a critical worker?

Critical workers (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision) are those working in health and care and other essential services, who can take their children to school or childcare, regardless of year group, and can use hotels and other accommodation services for work related purposes - for example if they can't get home after a shift or need to isolate from their families. This critical worker definition does not affect whether or not you can travel to work – if you are not a critical worker, you may still travel to work if you cannot reasonably work from home.

3.3 Will you open pubs / cinemas / hairdressers in July?

The roadmap (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy) sets out that some businesses (like pubs, cinemas or hairdressers) will not open until Step 3 is reached.

The government's current planning assumption is that this step will be no earlier than 4 July and subject to further detailed scientific advice, provided closer to the time, on how far we can go. When they do reopen, they should also meet the COVID-19 Secure guidelines.

3.4 What are the 'COVID-19 Secure' safety guidelines workplaces have to put in place?

We have set out clear, practical steps that businesses should take to ensure their workplaces are COVID-19 Secure (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19) and give their staff the confidence to return back to work.

These include how to keep as many people as possible safely apart from those they do not live with in various workplace settings.

3.5 Do people need to wear face coverings at work?

Face coverings are not compulsory. However, if you can, you are advised to wear face coverings in enclosed public spaces where social distancing is not possible and where you are more likely to come into contact with people you do not normally meet. For example, on public transport or in some shops. Face coverings can help us protect each other and reduce the spread of the disease if someone is suffering from coronavirus, but not showing symptoms. You should be prepared to remove your face covering if asked to do so by police officers and staff for the purposes of identification.

A face covering is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used as part of personal protective equipment by healthcare and other workers; these should continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace such as health and care workers and those in industrial settings like those exposed to dust hazards.

3.6 Will a face covering stop me getting COVID-19?

The evidence suggests that face coverings can help us protect each other and reduce the spread of the disease if someone is suffering from coronavirus, but not showing symptoms.

To protect yourself, you should continue to follow social distancing measures and isolation guidance (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing) and wash your hands regularly.

4. Workers' rights

4.1 My employer is asking me to come to work but I'm scared.

Employers and staff should discuss and agree working arrangements.

Employers should make all efforts to help people to work from home where they can. But where work cannot be done at home, employers should take clear, practical steps to help protect workers and create safe places to work, such as by shifting working or staggering processes and by following the "COVID-19 Secure" guidelines (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19). To identify the precautions needed to manage risk, your employer should discuss the workplace risk assessment with you to identify the practical ways of managing those risks.

If you remain concerned that your employer is not taking all practical steps to promote social distancing then you can report this to your local authority or the Health and Safety Executive who can take a range of action, including where appropriate requiring your employer to take additional steps.

4.2 What if they try to fire me because I won't go to work but cannot work at home?

We urge employers to take socially responsible decisions and listen to the concerns of their staff. Employers and employees should come to a pragmatic agreement about their working arrangements.

If individuals need advice, they should approach ACAS where they can get impartial advice about work disputes.

5. Public Transport

5.1 Who is allowed to travel on public transport?

If you need to travel to work or make an essential journey, you should cycle or walk if you can, but you can use public transport if this is not possible. Before you travel on public transport, consider if your journey is necessary and if you can, stay local. Try to reduce your travel. This will help keep the transport network running and allows people who need to make essential journeys to travel safely.

We have set out further advice on how to stay safe during your journey (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers).

5.2 Should people wear face coverings on public transport?

If you can, wear a face covering in an enclosed space where social distancing isn't possible and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet. This is most relevant for short periods indoors in crowded areas, for example on public transport or in some shops. From 15 June, you must wear a face covering on public transport. The evidence suggests that face coverings can help us protect each other and reduce the spread of the disease if someone is suffering from coronavirus, but not showing symptoms. You should be prepared to remove your face covering if asked to do so by police officers and staff for the purposes of identification.

If people choose to wear them, we are asking people to make their own face coverings at home, using scarves or other textile items. We are publishing guidance to help illustrate the process (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering).

We urge the public not to purchase medical or surgical masks as these should be reserved for health and social care workers.

5.3 Can I use public transport to get to green spaces?

You should avoid using public transport wherever possible. Consider all other forms of transport before using public transport. If you need to use public transport, you should follow the safer travel guidance for passengers (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#public-transport).

6. Schools and Childcare

6.1 Can children go back to early years settings and schools or university?

Early years settings are open for all children.

Primary schools are open for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 in smaller class sizes, as well as all children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

From Monday 15 June, secondary schools and further education colleges will also begin some face to face support with Year 10 and 12 pupils who have key exams next year. Only around a quarter of these pupils will be in school at any one time.

6.2 How will you make sure it is safe?

Keeping children and staff safe is our utmost priority. As more children return to school, we require new safety standards to set out how schools and early years settings can be adapted to operate safely.

We have published guidance advising schools (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings) and early years on reopening to ensure schools can adequately prepare new safety measures to operate safely and minimise the spread of the virus.

Protective measures to reduce transmission include regular hand cleaning, hygiene and cleaning measures, and small consistent group and class sizes of no more than 15 pupils. We have asked schools to consider staggering drop-off and arrival times, break times and assemblies, and make use of outdoor space.

7. Borders / international visitors

7.1 Are you isolating people at the border now?

The scientific advice shows that when domestic transmission is high, cases from abroad represent a small amount of the overall total and make no significant difference to the epidemic. Now that domestic transmission within the UK is coming under control, and other countries begin to lift lockdown measures, it is the right time to prepare new measures at the border.

7.2 What is self-isolation and which countries will it apply to?

We will be asking people travelling to the UK to make some sacrifices to stop coronavirus cases from being imported. In the same way as people in the UK have made large sacrifices to control the spread of coronavirus.

So what we will be requiring people to do on entering the UK is supply their contact details and details of their accommodation, and to self-isolate in their accommodation for 14 days, other than those on a short list of exemptions.

We will set out further details shortly.

7.3 Is this for foreign travellers only or British people returning home from holiday or living overseas?

All arrivals including British nationals will be required to provide their contact information and self-isolate upon arrival, other than those on a short list of exemptions.

8. Enforcement

8.1 How will police enforce the new rules?

The police and local authorities have the powers to enforce the requirements set out in law if people do not comply with them. The police will act with discretion and common sense in applying these measures, but if you breach the regulations, they may instruct you to disperse, leave an area, issue you with a fixed penalty notice or arrest you where they believe it necessary. They may also instruct you to take steps to stop your children breaking these legal requirements again if they have already done so.

If the police believe that you have broken these laws – or if you refuse to follow their instructions enforcing the law - a police officer may issue you with a fixed penalty notice of £100 (reduced to £50 if paid within 14 days). If you have already received a fixed penalty notice, the amount for further offences will increase in line with the table below.

First offence	£100
Second offence	£200
Third offence	£400
Fourth offence	£800
Fifth offence	£1600
Maximum penalty	£3200

For both individuals and companies, if you do not pay your fine you could be taken to court, with magistrates able to impose unlimited fines.

9. Devolved administrations

9.1 Does this guidance apply across the UK?

This guidance applies in England – people in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should follow the specific rules in those parts of the UK.

If you live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland additional guidance is available:

- Scotland (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-individuals-and-businesses-in-scotland)
- Wales (https://gov.wales/coronavirus)
- Northern Ireland (https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19)