



COVID-19: Guidance on keeping yourself and others safe

July 2021

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, we have all done what we can to protect ourselves and others and prevent serious illness and deaths.

Cases of COVID-19 are still spreading, and several different variants of the virus have been identified.

This leaflet gives advice on keeping yourself and others safe as COVID-19 continues to spread.

Each service or accommodation setting will have different COVID-19 measures in place to keep everyone safe. This may impact the services they offer. If you are unsure ask a support worker or outreach worker.

A reminder of the symptoms of COVID-19



A high temperature - you feel hot to touch on your chest or back.



A new, continuous cough - this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual).



The loss of or a change to your sense of smell or taste.

If you have any of the symptoms above, you should get a 'PCR test' as soon as possible. You can order a PCR test online here: www.gov.uk/getcoronavirus-test – speak to a support worker for help.

You should try and self-isolate until you get your test result.

There are other less common symptoms, so if you think you have been in contact with someone who may have COVID-19 or are feeling unwell you should also get tested. If you are unsure about your symptoms, you can call the NHS on 111 for free.

If you test positive, you should self-isolate for 10 days. Make sure you contact a support worker. They will be able to tell you what you need to do and support you to isolate safely.

Keep testing for COVID-19

Anyone that does **not** have symptoms of coronavirus should test themselves using lateral flow tests. It's a good idea to do a lateral flow test twice a week.

This is because about 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms but can still infect others, so getting tested is the best way to know whether you have the virus.

The test involves rubbing a cotton bud over your tonsils in your throat and on the inside of your nose. It gives a result within 30 minutes. Find our guides on doing a lateral flow test here: www.groundswell.org.uk/covid-testing/.

It's likely that your accommodation or a local service will have tests available to you. Ask a support worker for more information. Other ways to get tests are at a pharmacy, testing site or online here: www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests.

If you test positive for COVID-19, you should self-isolate as much as you can for 10 full days to stop the virus from spreading to other people.

If you are rough sleeping or in shared accommodation, we realise ordering a test and self-isolating will be a challenge. We recommend that you contact support staff from a day centre, outreach team or local support service and let them know your situation.

How to protect yourself and others

By continuing to follow these steps we can all reduce the risk of catching and spreading COVID-19:

- ✓ **Wash your hands with soap and hot water** for at least 20 seconds before and after you come into contact with people. If you don't have access to soap and water use alcohol-based gels.
- ✓ **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze – put the tissue in the bin and wash your hands immediately with soap and water (or alcohol-based gel).
- ✓ **Wear a face mask** or covering when you are with other people or in enclosed public spaces.
- ✓ **Keep your distance** from other people you don't live with or bed down with. Avoiding indoor communal areas as well as sleeping alone or with as few others as possible can really help.
- ✓ **Try not to share items** that other people have touched, such as bottles, towels, cups, cigarettes or syringes.
- ✓ **Spend time outside** when you are with other people. When you're inside **open windows and doors** when possible, to ventilate the room. This can rapidly reduce the risk of infection.
- ✓ **Follow any bathroom or kitchen rotas** that are in place to make sure rooms and equipment are clean before you use them.
- ✓ **Wipe down** packages or communal equipment with alcohol-based gels (a minimum 60% alcohol concentration kills the COVID-19 virus).

- ✓ **Have the full COVID-19 vaccination** (two doses of the injection).
- ✓ **Get tested** if you have any symptoms and test yourself regularly even if you don't have symptoms.
- ✓ **Try not to bring visitors** into your accommodation. If people do visit encourage them to wear a face mask and maintain social distancing.

If you do not have access to preventative equipment, hygiene or cleaning facilities ask staff (e.g., support worker or outreach worker) for help – we all want to do what we can to protect ourselves and others.

You are at increased risk of being severely ill or hospitalised from COVID-19 if you are clinically vulnerable. This means you:

- Have a weakened immune system.
- Have an underlying health condition.
- Are aged over 55.
- Were asked to shield during previous lockdown restrictions.

It's really important you and the people around you take extra precautions to limit your risk of catching COVID-19.

Help everyone stay safe by getting vaccinated

The vaccine stimulates the body's immune system to produce its own protection (antibodies) against the COVID-19 virus. Having the vaccine reduces your chances of getting seriously ill or dying, and passing it onto others.

The second dose is generally given 8-12 weeks after the first. It is important you have both vaccine doses to ensure you have the best level of protection you possibly can.

When you go to get the vaccine, medical staff will be on hand to answer any questions you may have.



You can get vaccinated by:

- Attending a walk-in vaccination site (available for those not registered with a GP). Visit the local vaccine website or walk-in sites in your local area.
- Booking an appointment at a local pharmacy or a mass vaccination site (for those registered with a GP).
- A vaccination service may come to your accommodation or a local service – check whether this is happening with a support worker.