

## Welsh Government's Self-Isolation Guide.

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## Who this guide is for

This advice is intended for:

- ❖ **people who have received a positive test result**
- ❖ **people with symptoms of COVID-19 who are waiting for a test result, or who have not been tested and do not require hospital treatment, who must remain at home until they are well**
- ❖ **people living in households with someone who shows symptoms that may be caused by coronavirus (COVID-19) or who has received a positive test result for COVID-19**

Any reference to a household in this guidance should be understood to include [extended households](#).

## Symptoms

The most important symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of one or more of the following:

- **new continuous cough**
- **high temperature**
- **loss of or change to your normal sense of smell or taste (anosmia)**

For most people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a mild illness. However, if you have any of the symptoms above you must self-isolate at home and [arrange to have a test](#) to see if you have COVID-19.

## What do we mean by possible or confirmed coronavirus infection (COVID-19)?

- Possible infection is where a person has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms and is currently awaiting a test result.
- Confirmed infection is where a person has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

## Main messages

**If you have symptoms of COVID-19, however mild, you must self-isolate at home for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started. Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. You should [arrange to have a test to see if you have COVID-19](#).**

**If you are not experiencing symptoms but have tested positive for COVID-19 you also must self-isolate for at least 10 days, starting from the day the test was taken. If you develop symptoms during this isolation period, you must restart your 10-day isolation from the day you develop symptoms.**

**After 10 days, if you still have a temperature you must continue to self-isolate and seek medical advice.**

You do not need to continue to self-isolate after 10 days if you only have a cough or loss of smell or taste, as these symptoms can last for several weeks after the infection has gone. See the [ending isolation](#) section below for more information.

**If you live with others, all other household members must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days.**

The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill or if they do not have symptoms, from the day their test was taken.

If anyone else in the household starts displaying symptoms, they must stay at home for at least 10 days from when their symptoms appear, regardless of what day they are on in their original 14-day isolation period. The [ending isolation section](#) below has more information.

If you live with others and you are the first in the household to have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), then you must stay at home for **at least 10 days**.

All other household members who remain well must stay at home and not leave the house for **14 days**.

**The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill.**

Staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community.

If you have symptoms, you should stay as far away from other members of your household as possible. It is especially important to stay away from anyone who is [at risk or extremely vulnerable \(shielding\)](#) with whom you share a household.

Reduce the spread of infection in your home by washing your hands regularly for 20 seconds, each time using soap and water, or use hand sanitiser, and cover coughs and sneezes.

[Following a positive test result](#), you will be contacted by a contact tracer on behalf of the NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect service. You will only be contacted after you have had a positive test.

If you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, or your condition gets worse, then use the [NHS 111 Wales online coronavirus service](#). If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111 Wales. For a medical emergency dial 999.

**If you develop symptoms again at any point after ending your first period of isolation (self or household) then you must follow the same guidance on self-isolation again.** Read [ending self-isolation and/or household-isolation](#) for further information.

**Will my household be tested if we think we have COVID-19 symptoms?**

Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 must immediately self-isolate and arrange to have a test to see if you have COVID-19. Follow the guidance at [apply for a coronavirus test](#).

People who have tested positive will be contacted by a contact tracer on behalf of the NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect service. You will only be contacted after you have had a positive test. You will be asked to provide information on who you've been in close proximity with on any occasion during a period beginning up to 2 days before you started experiencing symptoms. The information you provide will be handled in strict confidence and will enable the NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect service to get in touch with your contacts. They will tell them that they have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus. Your identity will not be revealed unless you give permission. They will be provided with support and advised to self-isolate for 14 days from their last contact with you. Members of their family will not be asked to self-isolate, but should follow the general social distancing guidance and avoid contact with the person isolating at home. Your contact will only be advised to take a test if they are displaying symptoms. Testing people without symptoms is not recommended as they may become infected even if the test is negative. If they test positive, the process will be repeated for this person, their household members and contacts.

## **Why staying at home is very important**

It is very important that individuals with symptoms of or a positive COVID-19 test and their household members stay at home. Staying at home will help prevent the spread of the virus to family, friends, the wider community, and particularly those at increased risk and the extremely vulnerable.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or a positive test you must remain at home for **at least 10 days** after the onset of your symptoms (see [ending self-isolation](#) below). This will reduce the risk of you infecting others.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or a positive test, then you must avoid contact with other household members as much as possible. The other household members, including those who do not have any symptoms, must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. You must not go out even to buy food or other essentials and any exercise must be taken within your home. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in your house became ill, or if they do not have symptoms, from the day their test was taken. (There is more information in the [ending self-isolation section](#)).

Staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community.

## **While you are staying at home, make sure you do the following things**

### **Stay at home**

You and everyone else in your household must remain at home. Do **not** go to work, school, or public areas, and do **not** use public transport or taxis.

Nobody should go out even to buy food or other essentials and any exercise must be taken within your home.

If you require help with buying groceries, other shopping or picking up medication, or walking a dog, you should ask friends or family. Alternatively, you can order medication by phone or online. You can also order your shopping online. Make sure you tell delivery drivers to leave items outside for collection if you order online. The delivery driver should not come into your home.

[Further guidance](#) on accessing help is available.

If you are an employee and unable to work due to COVID-19, please refer to this [guidance from the Department for Work and Pensions](#) to find out about the support that is available to you.

### **If you are living with children**

Keep following this advice to the best of your ability if you are living with children, however, we are aware that not all these measures will be possible.

What we have seen so far is that children with COVID-19 appear to be less severely affected. It is nevertheless important to do your best to ensure that all members of your household follow this guidance.

### **For those with learning disabilities, autism or serious mental illness**

We are aware that not all these measures will be possible if you, or those you are living with, have significant conditions such as learning disabilities, autism or serious mental illness. Please keep following this guidance

to the best of your ability, whilst keeping yourself and those close to you safe and well, ideally in line with any existing care plans.

### **Avoid contact with other members of your household as much as possible**

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, it is important to reduce the spread of infection to others in your household as much as possible.

You should stay in a well-ventilated room with a window to the outside that can be opened, separate from other people in your home if this is possible. Keep the door closed.

Use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household, if available. If you have to share these facilities, regular cleaning will be required. If a separate bathroom is not available, consider drawing up a bathroom rota for washing or bathing. You should use the facilities last, before thoroughly cleaning the bathroom. You should use separate towels from other household members, both for drying yourself after bathing or showering and for hand hygiene purposes.

You should avoid using shared spaces such as kitchens whilst others are present. Take your meals back to your room to eat. Use a dishwasher (if available) to clean and dry your used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them by hand using detergent and warm water and dry them thoroughly, using a separate tea towel.

### **If you have a vulnerable person living with you**

If you can, arrange for anyone who is [extremely vulnerable \(shielding\)](#) to move out of your home, to stay with friends or family for the duration of your home isolation period.

If you cannot arrange for extremely vulnerable people to move out of your home, stay away from the person as much as possible.

Those who are at increased risk or extremely vulnerable should be supported to take precautions to minimise their contact with other people in your household, regardless of whether others have symptoms or not. They should minimise time spent in shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas. Any shared spaces should be well ventilated.

If they can, they should use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household. If this is not possible, consider drawing up a rota for bathing, with the vulnerable person using the facilities first. Make sure they use separate towels from the other people in your house, both for drying themselves after bathing or showering and when washing their hands.

If you do share a toilet and bathroom with a vulnerable person, it is important that you clean them every time you use them (for example, wiping surfaces you have come into contact with).

If you share a kitchen with a vulnerable person, avoid using it while they are present. If they can, they should take their meals back to their room to eat. If you have one, use a dishwasher to clean and dry the family's used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using your usual washing up liquid and warm water and dry them thoroughly. If the vulnerable person is using their own utensils, remember to use a separate tea towel for drying these.

We understand that it will be difficult for some people to separate themselves from others at home. You must do your very best to follow this guidance and everyone in your household should regularly wash their hands, avoid touching their face, and clean frequently touched surfaces.

### **If you are breastfeeding while infected**

There is currently no evidence to suggest that the virus can be transmitted through breast milk. Infection can be spread to the baby in the same way as to anyone in close contact with you. The current evidence is that children with COVID-19 get much less severe symptoms than adults. The benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of the virus through breast milk or by being in close contact; however, this will be an individual decision and can be discussed with your midwife, health visitor or GP by telephone.

If you or a family member are feeding with formula or expressed milk, you should sterilise the equipment carefully before each use. You should not share bottles or a breast pump with someone else.

You can find more information at the [Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists website](#).

### **Reduce the spread of infection in your home**

#### **Wash your hands often**

Clean your hands frequently by washing with soap and water for 20 seconds or using hand sanitiser. This will help protect you and the people you live with. This is one of the most effective ways of reducing the risk of passing infection to others.

#### **Cover your coughs and sneezes**

Cover your mouth and nose with disposable tissues when you cough or sneeze. If you do not have one to hand, sneeze into the crook of your elbow, not into your hand. Dispose of tissues into a disposable rubbish bag and immediately wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use a hand sanitiser.

If you have a carer they should use disposable tissues to wipe away any mucus or phlegm after you have sneezed or coughed. Then they should wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds.

#### **Cleaning and disposal of waste**

When cleaning you should use your usual household products, like detergents and bleach, as these will be very effective at getting rid of the virus on surfaces. Clean frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, handrails, remote controls and table tops. This is particularly important if you have an at risk or extremely vulnerable person in the house.

Clean a shared bathroom each time you use it, for example by wiping the surfaces you have touched.

Personal waste (such as used tissues) and disposable cleaning cloths can be stored securely within disposable rubbish bags. These bags should be placed into another bag, tied securely and kept separate from other waste. This should be put aside for at least 72 hours before being put in your usual external household waste bin.

Other household waste can be disposed of as normal.

#### **Laundry**

To minimise the possibility of dispersing virus through the air, do not shake dirty laundry.

Wash items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. All dirty laundry can be washed in the same load.

If you do not have a washing machine, wait a further 72 hours after your self-isolation has ended when you can then take the laundry to a public launderette.

Do not share towels, including hand towels and tea towels.

### **Face coverings**

The evidence remains clear that the most effective way to protect yourself and others from infection is to follow social distancing rules, avoid touching surfaces and your face, and wash your hands regularly.

**Face coverings are not a substitute for these measures, but in some circumstances where it might be difficult to stay 2 metres away from others, we are advising the use of three-layer, non-medical face coverings.**

This is in line with the [World Health Organisation's latest technical advice](#).

Face coverings should be made up of three layers as set out by the World Health Organisation but do not need to be medical-grade face masks.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or a positive test result and you live with others, consider using a face covering inside your home when spending time in shared parts of the household. You must still avoid contact with other members of the household as much as possible. You must still stay at home for at least 10 days from when the symptoms started or from the date of your test. Wearing a face covering does not replace this.

People who are self-isolating, and members of their household, should double bag disposable face coverings and store them for 72 hours before putting them in a 'black bag' waste bin.

Read further [guidance on the use of face coverings](#).

Read about the [requirement to wear a face covering on public transport in Wales](#).

### **Do not have visitors in your home**

Do not invite or allow social visitors, such as other friends and family, to enter your home. If you want to speak to someone who is not a member of your household, use the phone or social media.

If you or a family member receive essential care in your home, then carers should continue to visit. Carers will be provided with facemasks and gloves to reduce the risk of you passing on the infection.

### **If you have pets in the household**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK is spread between humans. There is limited evidence that some animals, including companion animals or pets, can become infected with SARS-CoV-2 (which causes coronavirus (COVID-19)) following close contact with infected humans.

At this time, there is no evidence that pets can transmit the disease to humans. However, you should wash your hands after handling your pets or their waste. [Advice for pet owners](#).

### **What you can do to help yourself get better**

Drink water to keep yourself hydrated; you should drink enough during the day so your urine (pee) is a pale clear colour. You can use over-the-counter medications, such as paracetamol, to help with some of your symptoms. Use these according to the instructions on the packet or label and do not exceed the recommended dose.

### **If you or your family need to seek medical advice**

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness or the illness of someone in your household is worsening. If it's not an emergency, contact [NHS 111 Wales](#). If you have no internet access, you should call 111. If it is a medical emergency and you need to call an ambulance, dial 999 and inform the call handler or operator that you or your relative have COVID-19 symptoms.

All routine medical and dental appointments should usually be cancelled whilst you and the family are staying at home. If you are concerned or have been asked to attend in person within the period you are self-isolating, discuss this with your medical contact first (for example, your GP, local hospital or outpatient service), using the number they have provided. If your concerns are related to your COVID-19 symptoms contact [NHS 111 Wales online coronavirus service](#). If you have no internet access, you should call 111.

### **Looking after your wellbeing while staying at home**

We know that staying at home for a prolonged period can be difficult, frustrating and lonely for some people and that you or other household members may feel low. It can be particularly challenging if you don't have much space or access to a garden.

It's important to remember to take care of your mind as well as your body and to get support if you need it. Stay in touch with family and friends over the phone or on social media. There are also sources of support and information that can help, such as the [Every Mind Matters website](#).

Think about things you can do during your time at home. People who have stayed at home for a week or more have kept themselves busy with activities such as cooking, reading, online learning and watching films. If you feel well enough you can take part in light exercise within your home.

Many people find it helpful to remind themselves why what they are doing is so important. Hopefully, none of your family will experience anything more than mild symptoms, but some people are badly affected by COVID-19. By staying home, you are helping to protect your friends and family and protecting the lives of others, as well as making sure the NHS does not get overwhelmed.

There are things that you can do to help make self-isolation easier. These include:

- ✓ plan ahead and think about what you will need in order to be able to stay at home for the full duration of isolation
- ✓ talk to your employer, friends and family to ask for their help to access the things you will need while staying at home
- ✓ think about and plan how you can get access to food and other supplies such as medications that you will need during this period
- ✓ ask friends or family to drop off anything you need or order supplies online, but make sure these are left outside your home for you to collect
- ✓ make sure that you keep in touch with friends and family over the phone or through social media
- ✓ think about things you can do during your time at home. People who have successfully completed a period of staying at home have kept themselves busy with activities such as cooking, reading, online learning and watching films

- ✓ many people find it helpful to plan out the full days of your self-isolation, on a calendar. You may also find it helpful to plan in advance what you will do if, for example, someone in the household were to feel much worse, such as having difficulties breathing
- ✓ when you are feeling better, remember that physical exercise can be good for your wellbeing. Look for online classes or courses that can help you take light exercise in your home

## **Ending self-isolation and household-isolation**

### **Ending self-isolation**

If you have had symptoms of COVID19 or a positive test, then you may end your self-isolation **after 10 days** and return to your normal routine if you do not have symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell or taste. **If you still have a high temperature, keep self-isolating until your temperature returns to normal and seek medical advice.**

**After 10 days if you just have a cough or change to or loss of smell or taste you do not need to continue to self-isolate.** This is because a cough or change to or loss of smell or taste can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. **The 10 day period starts from the day when you first became ill.**

If you continue to feel unwell and have not already sought medical advice, you should contact [NHS 111 Wales online](#). If your home has no internet access, you should call 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

### **Household isolation**

**After 10 days, if the first person to become ill feels better and no longer has symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell or taste they can return to their normal routine.**

**If you live with others, then everyone else in the household who remains well should end their isolation after 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day the first person in the household became ill. People in the household who remain well after 14 days are unlikely to be infectious.**

If anyone in the household becomes unwell during the 14-day period, they should [arrange to have a test to see if they have COVID-19](#).

If their test result is positive, they must follow the same advice for people with COVID-19 symptoms, that is, after 10 days of their symptoms starting, if they feel better and no longer have symptoms other than cough or loss of or change to sense of smell or taste – they can also return to their normal routine. However, if their test result is negative, they must continue with isolation as part of the household for the full 14 days.

Should someone develop COVID-19 symptoms late in the 14-day household-isolation period (for example, on day 10 or later) **the isolation period for the rest of the household does not need to be extended. Only the person with the new COVID-19 symptoms has to stay at home for at least a further 10 days, and should [arrange to have a test to see if they have COVID-19](#).**

At the end of the 14-day period, anyone in the household who has not become unwell can return to their normal routine.

**If anyone becomes unwell after the 14 day period, the whole self-isolation process must begin again for the whole household not just the family member displaying symptoms. See [After ending self-isolation and/or household-isolation section](#) for further information.**

If any person in the household with COVID-19 symptoms has not had any signs of improvement and have not already sought medical advice, they should contact [NHS 111 Wales](#). If your home has no internet access, you should call 111. For a medical emergency, they should dial 999.

A cough or loss of or change to smell or taste may persist for several weeks in some people, despite the infection having cleared. A persistent cough or loss of or change to smell or taste does not mean someone must continue to self-isolate for more than 10 days.

### **After ending self-isolation and/or household-isolation**

#### **What to do if you have another episode of COVID-19 symptoms after the end of your first period of self- or household-isolation**

If you develop COVID-19 symptoms again at any point after ending your first period of isolation (self or household) **then you need to follow the same [guidance on self-isolation](#) again**. This means you need to stay at home for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started if you live alone and arrange a test. If you live in a household, you must stay at home for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started, arrange a test for yourself, and all other household members must stay at home for 14 days.

This will help to ensure that you are continuing to protect others within your household and in the community by minimising the amount of infection that is passed on.

#### **If you previously tested positive for COVID-19 and have another episode of symptoms, do you need to self-isolate again?**

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you will probably have developed some immunity to the disease. But it cannot be guaranteed that will happen in all cases, nor exactly for how long that will last.

If you have previously tested positive but develop symptoms again, you must self-isolate for at least 10 days from onset of symptoms and be tested. If you live in a household, all other household members must stay at home for 14 days.

If you are concerned about your new possible COVID-19 symptoms (a new, continuous cough or a high temperature or loss of or change to smell or taste), use the [NHS 111 Wales coronavirus service](#) or call 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

### **Self-isolation notes for employees**

If your employer has asked for a self-isolation note, use the [COVID-19 symptom checker on NHS 111 Wales](#).

The self-isolation notes are only available to patients who are advised to self-isolate by the online symptom checker.

Please do not call 111 as our call handlers will be unable to assist you.

The self-isolation note generates a Unique Reference Number (URN) which an employer will be able to use to verify that your note is genuine.

If someone is notified to self-isolate for 14 days because they have come into close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), they will be provided with written confirmation of the instruction to self-isolate which they can share with their employers.

### **Last updated**

4 August 2020

