

Coronavirus (COVID-19) (/coronavirus)

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 6. [COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/)
- [UK Health Security Agency \(https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency\)](#)

Guidance

Stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection

Updated 17 January 2022

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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

1. What has changed

The self-isolation advice for people with coronavirus (COVID-19) has changed. It is now possible to end self-isolation after 5 full days if you have 2 negative LFD tests taken on consecutive days. The first LFD test should not be taken before the fifth day after your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you did not have symptoms). The self-isolation period remains 10 full days for those without negative results from 2 LFD tests taken a day apart.

2. Who this guidance is for

This guidance is for:

- people with [symptoms](#) that may be caused by COVID-19, including those who are waiting for a COVID-19 test result
- people who have received a positive COVID-19 LFD or PCR test result (whether or not they have symptoms)
- people who currently live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 symptoms, or with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 by LFD or PCR test

In this guidance a household means:

- one person living alone
- a group of people (who may or may not be related) living at the same address and who share cooking facilities, bathrooms or toilets, or living areas – this may include students in boarding schools or halls of residence who share such facilities
- a group of people who share a nomadic way of life for example those who live on Traveller sites, in vehicles or on canal boats

Follow separate [guidance if you have had contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 but do not currently live in the same household as them](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person>).

If you have [arrived in England from overseas you may also need to self-isolate, but should follow separate guidance on travelling to England from another country during COVID-19](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-to-england-from-another-country-during-coronavirus-covid-19) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-to-england-from-another-country-during-coronavirus-covid-19>).

This guidance applies in England.

3. Symptoms

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are 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)

For most people, COVID-19 will be a mild illness. However, if you have any of the symptoms listed above, even if your symptoms are mild, stay at home and [arrange to have a test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) (<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>). You do not need to take a PCR test if you have already taken an LFD test and the result was positive.

There are several other symptoms linked with COVID-19. These symptoms may have another cause and are not on their own a reason to have a COVID-19 PCR test. If you are concerned about your symptoms, seek medical advice.

If you have received one or more doses of COVID-19 vaccine and have any of the main symptoms of COVID-19 or have received a positive LFD or PCR test result, you should still follow this guidance. This is because it is still possible to get COVID-19 and spread it to others, even if you are vaccinated.

4. Tests for COVID-19

There are 2 main types of test currently being used to detect if someone has COVID-19:

- polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests
- lateral flow device (LFD) antigen tests – also known as rapid lateral flow tests

4.1 PCR tests

PCR tests detect the RNA (ribonucleic acid, the genetic material) of a virus. It takes some time to get the results because PCR tests are usually processed in a laboratory.

PCR tests are the best way to diagnose COVID-19 infection in people who have symptoms and who also may require treatment. If you have any of the main symptoms of COVID-19, you should [arrange to have a PCR test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) (<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>).

4.2 LFD tests

LFD tests detect proteins in the coronavirus and work in a similar way to a pregnancy test. They are reliable, simple and quick to use and are very good at identifying people who have high levels of coronavirus and are most likely to pass on infection to others. When rates of infection are high, it is very likely that people with a positive LFD test result have COVID-19.

LFD tests can be taken by people at home (self-reported tests) or under the supervision of a trained operator who processes the test, reads, and reports the result (assisted tests). LFD tests are mainly used in people who do not have symptoms of COVID-19. If you take an LFD test and the result is positive, you should report the result and follow this guidance. You do not need to take a follow-up PCR test, unless:

- you wish to claim the [Test and Trace Support Payment](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme>) – to claim the Test and Trace Support Payment, you must have tested positive for COVID-19 following a PCR test or an assisted LFD test
- you have received [an email or letter](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/letter-to-patients-important-information-about-new-treatments-for-coronavirus/) (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/letter-to-patients-important-information-about-new-treatments-for-coronavirus/>) from the NHS because of a health condition that means you may be suitable for new COVID-19 treatments – if this applies to you and you develop any COVID-19 symptoms, you should use the PCR test kit that was sent to you in the post for this purpose; if you have not received a PCR test kit you can [arrange to have a PCR test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) (<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>)
- you are taking LFD tests as part of research or surveillance programmes, and the programme asks you to take a follow-up PCR test
- you have a positive day 2 LFD test result [after you arrive in England](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-to-england-from-another-country-during-coronavirus-covid-19) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-to-england-from-another-country-during-coronavirus-covid-19>)

If your LFD test result is positive you may go on to develop symptoms in the next few days. If you develop any of the [main symptoms](#) of COVID-19 and you are concerned, or your symptoms are worsening, contact 111 or speak to your GP. In an emergency dial 999.

5. If you have COVID-19 symptoms or a positive LFD or PCR test result

If you develop any of the main symptoms of COVID-19, stay at home and self-isolate immediately.

If you have a positive LFD or PCR test result but do not have any of the main [symptoms of COVID-19](#), stay at home and self-isolate as soon as you receive the results. You should do this even if you have received one or more doses of COVID-19 vaccine.

Other people in your household might need to self-isolate too. Please see section below for information [on what the other members of your household need to do](#).

5.1 Order a PCR test if you have any of the main symptoms of COVID-19

If you have any of the main symptoms of COVID-19, [arrange to have a PCR test by ordering it online](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) (<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>) or by calling 119. You do not need to take a PCR test if you have already taken an LFD test and the result was positive.

You should stay at home while you are waiting for a home test kit, a test site appointment or a test result. You can leave your home in a few specific circumstances, but do not go to work, school, or public areas and do not use public transport or taxis. See the circumstances in which [you can leave home](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1045/made) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1045/made>).

If you need to leave your home to get to a test site, wear a well-fitting face covering made with multiple layers, stay at least 2 metres apart from other people who you do not live with, and return home immediately afterwards.

5.2 Stay at home and self-isolate

Stay at home and self-isolate if you have any of the main symptoms of COVID-19 or if you have a positive LFD or PCR test result. Self-isolation will help protect your family, friends and the wider community by reducing the risk that you will pass the infection on to others.

Your self-isolation period starts immediately from when your symptoms started, or, if you do not have any symptoms, from when your positive LFD or PCR test was taken, whichever test was taken first. Your self-isolation period includes the day your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you do not have symptoms), and the next 10 full days. It may be possible to end your self-isolation earlier (see below).

This means that if, for example, your symptoms started at any time on the 15th of the month (or if you did not have symptoms but your first positive COVID-19 test was taken on the 15th), your self-isolation period ends at 23:59hrs on the 25th of the month.

You can return to your normal routine and stop self-isolating after 10 full days if your symptoms have gone, or if the only symptoms you have are a cough or anosmia, which can last for several weeks. If you still have a high temperature after 10 days or are otherwise unwell, stay at home and seek medical advice.

You may be able to end your self-isolation period before the end of the 10 full days. You can take an LFD test from 5 days after the day your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you did not have symptoms), and another LFD test on the following day. If both these test results are negative, and you do not have a high temperature, you may end your self-isolation after the second negative test result.

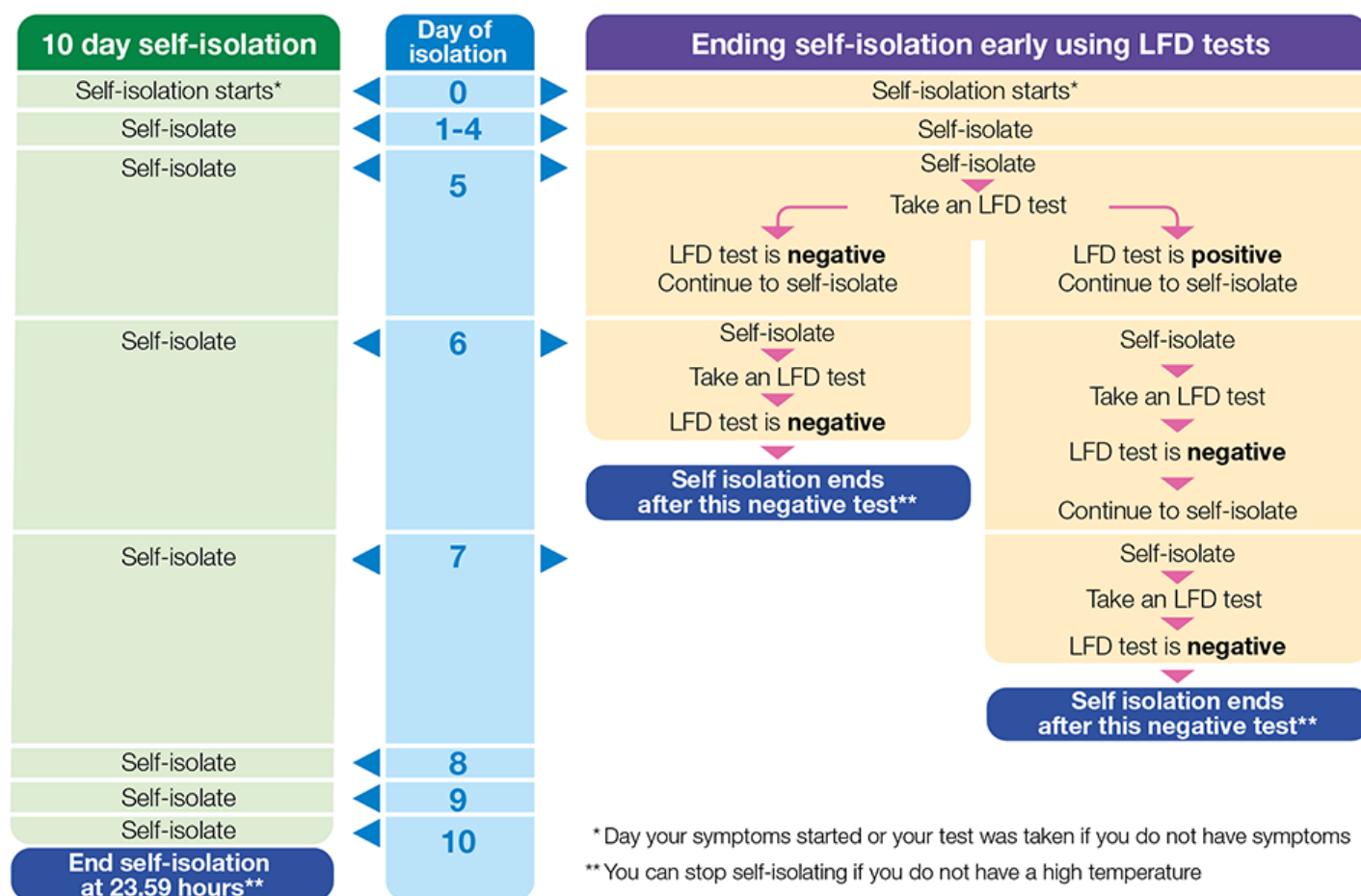
[Report your LFD test results](https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result) (<https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result>) after taking each test.

You should not take an LFD test before the fifth day of your self-isolation period, and you should only end your self-isolation after you have had 2 negative LFD tests taken on consecutive days. You should stop testing after you have had 2 consecutive negative test results.

This guidance also applies to children and young people who usually attend an education or childcare setting.

You will be unable to use either your domestic or travel NHS COVID Pass for 10 days following a positive test result.

Examples of when to end self-isolation if you have had COVID-19 symptoms or have received a positive COVID-19 test result



This means that if, for example, your symptoms started at any time on the 15th of the month (or if you did not have symptoms but your first positive COVID-19 test was taken on the 15th), you may take daily LFD tests from the 20th of the month. If your LFD test results are negative on the 20th and 21st, and you do not have a high temperature, you may end your self-isolation period after the negative test result on the 21st of the month.

If both your LFD test results are negative, it is likely that you were not infectious at the time the tests were taken. To further reduce the chance of passing COVID-19 on to others, if you end your self-isolation period before 10 full days you are strongly advised:

- to limit close contact with other people outside your household, especially in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces
- to work from home if you are able to
- in addition to venues where it is a legal requirement, to wear a face covering in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces and where you are in close contact with other people
- to limit contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19
- to follow the [guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do#keeping-yourself-and-others-safe) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do#keeping-yourself-and-others-safe>)

You should follow this advice until 10 full days from when your self-isolation period started.

You do not need to take any more LFD tests after the 10th day of your self-isolation period and you may stop self-isolating after this day. This is because you are unlikely to be infectious after the 10th day of your self-isolation period. Even if you have a positive LFD test result on the 10th day of your self-isolation period you do not need to take any more LFD tests after this day and you do not need a follow-up PCR test. If you are concerned you may choose to limit close contact with other people, especially those who are at higher risk of severe illness until 14 days after the start of your self-isolation period.

There is additional [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>).

If you are self-isolating because of a positive test result but did not have any symptoms, and you develop COVID-19 symptoms within your self-isolation period, you do not need to start a new self-isolation period.

If you develop COVID-19 symptoms at any point after ending your first period of self-isolation you and your household should follow the steps in this guidance again.

Most people with COVID-19 will experience a mild illness. Seek prompt medical attention if your illness or the illness of someone in your household is worsening.

Stay as far away from other members of your household as possible. Wherever possible, avoid using shared spaces such as kitchens and other living areas while others are present and take your meals back to your room to eat. Wear a [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>) or a surgical mask when spending time in shared areas inside your home.

Take exercise within your home, garden or private outdoor space. Follow the general advice to [reduce the spread of the infection](#) within your household.

It may be difficult for some people to separate themselves from others in their household. Not all these measures will be possible if you are living with children or have caring responsibilities, but follow this guidance to the best of your ability in these circumstances.

If you receive a request by text, email or phone to log into the [NHS Test and Trace](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/nhs-test-and-trace-if-youve-been-in-contact-with-a-person-who-has-coronavirus/) (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/nhs-test-and-trace-if-youve-been-in-contact-with-a-person-who-has-coronavirus/>) service website you should do this. You will be asked about when your symptoms started. You should provide this information because it will be used to identify who has been in contact with you while you have been infectious.

You will be asked about your recent contacts so that they can be given public health advice. They will not be told your identity. It is very important that you provide this information, as it will play a vital role in helping to protect your family, friends and the wider community.

5.3 Visitors to your household

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, or a positive LFD or PCR test result, do not invite or allow social visitors to enter your home, including friends and family. If you want to speak to someone who is not a member of your household, use the phone, email or social media.

If you or a family member receive essential care in your home, carers should continue to visit and follow the [provision of home care guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-home-care/coronavirus-covid-19-provision-of-home-care) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-home-care/coronavirus-covid-19-provision-of-home-care>) to reduce the risk of infection.

All non-essential in-house services and repairs should be postponed until the self-isolation period is completed. Delivery drivers should not come into your home, so make sure you ask them to leave items outside for collection.

5.4 If you have a negative COVID-19 PCR test result after being tested because you had symptoms of COVID-19

If your PCR test result is negative but you still have symptoms, you may have another viral illness such as a cold, flu or a stomach bug. You should stay at home until you feel well and for at least 2 more days if you have had [diarrhoea or vomiting](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diarrhoea-and-vomiting/) (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diarrhoea-and-vomiting/>). Seek medical attention if you are concerned about your symptoms.

You can stop self-isolating unless you have been advised by [NHS Test and Trace that you are legally required to self-isolate](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/nhs-test-and-trace-if-youve-been-in-contact-with-a-person-who-has-coronavirus/) (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/nhs-test-and-trace-if-youve-been-in-contact-with-a-person-who-has-coronavirus/>). Anyone in your household who is self-isolating because of your symptoms can also stop self-isolating.

5.5 Testing after your self-isolation period has ended

If you have previously had COVID-19, you will probably have developed some immunity to the disease. However, it cannot be guaranteed that everyone will develop immunity, or how long it will last. It is also possible for PCR tests to remain positive for some time after the period of active COVID-19 infection.

If you have previously received a positive COVID-19 test result, you are advised not to take another PCR test within 90 days of this result unless you develop any new main symptoms of COVID-19, or if you are required to take a PCR test upon entry into the UK.

If you have a positive PCR test result within 90 days of a previous positive test result you must stay at home, self-isolate and follow the steps in this guidance again.

If it is more than 90 days since you tested positive by PCR for COVID-19, and you have new symptoms of COVID-19, or a positive PCR test, follow the steps in this guidance again.

6. If you live in the same household as someone with COVID-19

Follow separate [guidance if you have had contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 but do not currently live in the same household as them](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person>).

Anyone who has any of the main symptoms of COVID-19 should stay at home and self-isolate immediately. They should order a PCR test unless they have already taken an LFD test and the result was positive.

If you do not have symptoms of COVID-19 and live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, you are legally required to self-isolate unless you meet any of the following conditions:

- you are fully vaccinated – fully vaccinated means you have had 2 doses of an [approved vaccine](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/countries-with-approved-covid-19-vaccination-programmes-and-proof-of-vaccination) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/countries-with-approved-covid-19-vaccination-programmes-and-proof-of-vaccination>) such as Pfizer BioNTech, AstraZeneca or Spikevax (formerly Moderna); you are also fully vaccinated if you have had one dose of the single-dose Janssen vaccine
- you are aged under 18 years
- you have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- you are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

If you meet any of these 4 conditions (and are therefore not legally required to self-isolate), follow the guidance further down for [contacts who are not legally required to self-isolate](#).

6.1 Household contacts who are required to self-isolate

If you have been notified by NHS Test and Trace because you live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, and you are aged over 18 years and not fully vaccinated, you are legally required to self-isolate. This does not apply if you have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial or you are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons. Do not go to work, school, or public areas and do not use public transport or taxis.

Your self-isolation period includes the day the first person in your household's [symptoms](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection#symptoms) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection#symptoms>) started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms) and the next 10 full days. This means that if, for example, your 10 day self-isolation period starts on the 15th of the month, your self-isolation period ends at 23:59 hrs on the 25th and you can return to your normal routine.

You may be entitled to a payment of £500 from your local authority under the [Test and Trace Support Payment scheme](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme>). If you are the parent or guardian of a child who has been told to self-isolate, you may also be entitled to this payment.

Failure to comply with self-isolation may result in a fine, starting from £1,000. Parents or guardians are legally responsible for ensuring that anyone under 18 self-isolates if they test positive for COVID-19 and are contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate.

6.1.1 Take a PCR test

You are advised to take a single PCR test as soon as possible while you are self-isolating. You should take this PCR test because you are at a higher risk of being infected. The results of the PCR test will help NHS Test and Trace contact people who may have caught the virus from you and advise them on what to do.

If your PCR test result during your self-isolation period is negative, you must continue to self-isolate as you could still become infectious and pass the infection on to others. Stay at home for the full 10 days to avoid putting others at risk.

If your PCR test result is positive, [follow the advice for people with COVID-19](#) to stay at home. You must start a new self-isolation period, regardless of where you are in your original 10 day self-isolation period. This means that your total self-isolation period may be longer than 10 days.

If you have previously tested positive for COVID-19, you will probably have developed some immunity to the disease. However, it cannot be guaranteed that everyone will develop immunity, or how long it will last. It is possible for PCR tests to remain positive for some time after COVID-19 infection.

If you have previously received a positive COVID-19 test result within the last 90 days and you are identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 you should not take a PCR test unless you develop any of the main symptoms of COVID-19.

6.1.2 If you develop symptoms while you are self-isolating as a contact

If you live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 and you develop any of the main [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 while you are self-isolating, you should [arrange to have a COVID-19 PCR test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) (<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>). If your test result is positive, follow the [advice for people with COVID-19](#) to stay at home. You must start a new self-isolation period. This begins when your symptoms started, regardless of where you are in your original 10 day self-isolation period. This means that your total self-isolation period may be longer than 10 days.

If this PCR test result is negative, you must continue to self-isolate as you could still become infectious and pass the infection on to others. Stay at home for the full 10 days to avoid putting others at risk.

If other household members develop symptoms during this period, you do not need to isolate for longer than 10 days.

6.2 Household contacts who are not required to self-isolate

If you live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 you are at significantly higher risk of becoming infected yourself.

If you are fully vaccinated or aged under 18 years, and you live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, you are not legally required to self-isolate. You are also not legally required to self-isolate if you have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial or you are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons.

COVID-19 vaccines reduce the risk of you becoming severely ill if you catch COVID-19. If you are vaccinated against COVID-19 you may still catch it and pass it on to others, even if you do not have any symptoms.

LFD tests are very good at identifying people who have high levels of coronavirus and are most likely to pass on infection to others, even if you do not have symptoms. You are therefore strongly advised to take daily LFD tests during the period you are at highest risk of becoming infected yourself.

If you are aged 5 years and over and live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, and are not legally required to self-isolate, you are strongly advised to:

- take an LFD test every day for 7 days, or until 10 days after the household member who has COVID-19 started their self-isolation period if this is earlier
- take this daily LFD test before you leave your home for the first time that day
- [report your LFD test results \(https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result\)](https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result) after taking each test – reporting positive LFD test results means that NHS Test and Trace can get in touch with your contacts and advise them on what to do; reporting negative LFD test results helps us understand more about the spread of COVID-19

If you take an LFD test and the result is positive, you should immediately self-isolate to prevent you from passing the infection on to other people and [follow the advice for people who have COVID-19](#). You do not need to take a follow-up PCR test.

If your daily LFD test result is negative, it is likely that you were not infectious at the time the test was taken. To further reduce the chance of passing COVID-19 on to others, you are strongly advised:

- to limit close contact with other people outside your household, especially in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces
- to work from home if you are able to
- in addition to venues where it is a legal requirement, to wear a face covering in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces and where you are in close contact with other people
- to limit contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19
- to follow the [guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19 \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do#keeping-yourself-and-others-safe\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do#keeping-yourself-and-others-safe)

If you are unable to take a daily LFD test then you are still strongly advised to follow this advice to reduce the chance of passing COVID-19 on to others.

Follow this advice until the household member who has COVID-19 reaches the end of their self-isolation period.

If you are a health or social care worker who has been identified as a household contact and are exempt from self-isolation, there is [additional guidance available \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings) that you should follow to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 in these settings.

Children and young people aged under 18 years who usually attend an education or childcare setting and who have been identified as a close contact should continue to attend the setting as normal.

Regular LFD tests are not recommended for children aged under 5. If they live with someone who has COVID-19 they are not legally required to self-isolate but you should limit their contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19 and arrange for them to take a PCR test as soon as possible.

If you develop [symptoms](#) at any time, even if these are mild, stay at home and self-isolate immediately, [arrange to have a COVID-19 PCR test \(https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test\)](#) and follow the [guidance for people with COVID-19 symptoms](#).

7. Reducing the spread of COVID-19 in your household

7.1 How COVID-19 is spread

COVID-19 spreads from person to person through small droplets, aerosols and through direct contact. Surfaces and belongings can also be contaminated with COVID-19 when people with the infection cough or sneeze or touch them. The risk of spread is greatest when people are close to each other, especially in poorly ventilated indoor spaces and when people spend a lot of time together in the same room.

Keeping your distance, washing your hands and good respiratory hygiene (using and disposing of tissues), cleaning surfaces and keeping indoor spaces [well ventilated \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-ventilation-of-indoor-spaces-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-ventilation-of-indoor-spaces-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus) are the most important ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

People who have COVID-19 can infect others from around 2 days before symptoms start, and for up to 10 days after. They can pass the infection to others, even if they have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all, which is why they must stay at home.

People who live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 are at higher risk of developing COVID-19. They could spread the disease to others even when feeling well.

7.2 How to limit close contact with others in the household if you have COVID-19

Spend as little time as possible in shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas. Avoid using shared spaces such as kitchens and other living areas while others are present and take your meals back to your room to eat. Observe strict social distancing.

Ask the people you live with to help by bringing your meals to your door, helping with cleaning and by giving you space.

Use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household where possible. If a separate bathroom is not available, try and use the facilities last, before cleaning the bathroom using your usual cleaning products. The bathroom should be cleaned regularly.

You should use separate towels from other household members, both for drying yourself after bathing or showering and for drying your hands. Keep your room well-ventilated by opening a window to the outside.

Use 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 mask when spending time in shared areas inside your home to minimise the risk of spread to others. Used correctly, they may help to protect others by reducing the transmission of COVID-19 but they do not replace the need to limit your contact with other household members.

Following expert clinical advice and the successful rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine programme, people previously considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable are no longer being advised to shield. Some people are still at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19 and may have been advised by their health professional to consider taking additional precautions. If someone in the household has been advised to take such precautions, such as maintaining distance from others, they should be supported to do so.

7.3 Things you can do to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in your household

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

GermDefence is easy to use and only takes 10 minutes to identify actions and make a plan on how to protect yourself. [GermDefence](http://lang.germdefence.org/) (<http://lang.germdefence.org/>) is also available in a range of different languages.

Everyone should also take the following steps to reduce the spread of infection within their household. [Please also refer to the accompanying illustrated guide to reducing household transmission](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>).

7.3.1 Wash your hands

This is an important way to reduce the risk of catching COVID-19 or passing it on to others. Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose and before you eat or handle food. Clean your hands frequently and avoid touching your face.

7.3.2 Cover coughs and sneezes

Cover your mouth and nose with disposable tissues when you cough or sneeze. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow, not into your hand.

Dispose of tissues into a rubbish bag and immediately wash your hands. If you have a carer, they should use disposable tissues to wipe away any mucus or phlegm after you have sneezed or coughed and then wash or sanitise their hands.

7.3.3 Clean your home to reduce spread of infection

Regularly clean frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles and remote controls, and shared areas such as kitchens and bathrooms.

Use standard household cleaning products like detergents and bleach to clean your home as these are very effective at getting rid of the virus on surfaces. Clean shared bathrooms each time they are used, especially the surfaces you have touched, using your usual bathroom cleaning products.

Cleaning cloths and personal waste such as used tissues and disposable face coverings should be stored in disposable rubbish bags. These bags should be placed into another bag, tied securely and 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.

Use a dishwasher to clean and dry your crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them by hand using washing up liquid and warm water and dry thoroughly using a separate tea towel.

7.3.4 Laundry

To reduce the possibility of spreading the virus through the air, do not shake dirty laundry. Wash items 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.

7.3.5 Ventilate indoor areas

If someone is self-isolating, keep a window slightly open in their room and keep the door closed to reduce the spread of contaminated air to other parts of the household. If the person that is self-isolating needs to use any shared space in the home, such as the kitchen or other living areas while others are present, keep these spaces well ventilated, for example by opening windows while the person who is self-isolating is in the shared space, and for a short period after they have left.

Leave extractor fans (for example in bathrooms) running for longer than usual with the door closed after use.

7.4 Caring for pets

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

Pet owners who have COVID-19 or who are self-isolating with symptoms should restrict contact with pets and wash their hands thoroughly before and after interacting with their pet.

8. Looking after your health and wellbeing

8.1 Looking after your mental and physical wellbeing while staying at home

Staying at home and self-isolating for a prolonged period can be difficult, frustrating and lonely for some people and you or other household members may feel low. It can be particularly challenging if you do not have much space or access to a garden.

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, including a COVID-19 hub with advice for those staying at home.

Many people find it helpful to remind themselves why what they are doing is so important. By staying at home, you are helping to protect your friends and family, other people in your community and the NHS.

Things that you can do to help make staying at home easier:

- keep in touch with friends and family over the phone or through social media
- 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
- plan ahead and think about what you will need to be able to stay at home for the full duration
- ask your employer, friends and family for help to access the things you will need while staying at home
- think about and plan how you can get food and other supplies, such as medication, that you will need during this period
- check if your neighbourhood or local community has a volunteer system that could help bring you supplies or provide other support
- ask friends or family to drop off anything you need or order supplies online or by phone, making sure these are left outside your home for you to collect
- think about things you can do during your time at home such as cooking, reading, online learning and watching films
- many people find it helpful to plan out the full 10 days. You may also find it helpful to plan in advance what you will do if, for example, someone in your household were to feel much worse

If you need help for a mental health crisis, emergency or breakdown, seek immediate advice and assessment. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, urgent mental health support is available to adults and children around the clock. Find your [local NHS helpline \(https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/\)](https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/) by searching for your postcode or home town in a new service finder.

8.2 If you need medical advice

Health and care services remain open to help people with all health conditions, including COVID-19. Most people with COVID-19 will experience a mild illness which can be managed at home. Find out more about [managing the symptoms of COVID-19 at home \(https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/how-to-treat-symptoms-at-home/\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/how-to-treat-symptoms-at-home/).

All routine medical and dental appointments should be cancelled while you are staying at home. If you are concerned or have been asked to attend in person during this time, discuss this with your medical contact first (for example, your GP or dentist, local hospital or outpatient service).

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness or the illness of someone in your household is worsening. If it is not an emergency, contact the [NHS 111 online \(https://111.nhs.uk/\)](https://111.nhs.uk/) COVID-19 service or NHS 111 for other health conditions. If you have no internet access, call NHS 111.

If it is a medical emergency and you need to call an ambulance, dial 999. Inform the call handler or operator that you or someone in your household has COVID-19 or symptoms if that is the case.

9. Financial or other practical support

9.1 Financial support

Self-isolation is one of the most important things we can do to help stop the spread of the virus and protect our friends and family, our community and the NHS. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, have received a positive test result, or have been told you are a contact with someone who has, self-isolation is the only way to guarantee you won't pass COVID-19 to others. If you are told to self-isolate, you should do so straight away [Find out what support you can get if you're affected by COVID-19 \(https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support\)](https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support).

If you can, ask friends, family or neighbours to go out and get food and other essentials for you. If you do not have others to help you, there may be charities or community groups who can help in your area or your local shops, markets and wholesalers may offer a delivery service (by phone or by email).

The NHS Volunteer Responders programme 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 \(https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/\)](https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/) for further information. There may also be other voluntary or community services in your local area that you can access for support.

If you are unable to work due to COVID-19, see guidance from the [Department for Work and Pensions \(https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/worker-support\)](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/worker-support) to find out about support available to you. You may be entitled to a one-off payment of £500 through the [NHS Test and Trace Support Payment scheme \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme) if you are required to stay at home and self-isolate. If you are the parent or guardian of a child who has been told to self-isolate, you may also be entitled to this support payment. You can apply for the NHS Test and Trace Support Payment online or through the [NHS COVID-19 app \(https://faq.covid19.nhs.uk/article/KA-01339/en-us\)](https://faq.covid19.nhs.uk/article/KA-01339/en-us).

You will be eligible for this payment if you live in England and you have had a positive assisted LFD or PCR test result, NHS Test and Trace has told you to self-isolate, or the NHS COVID-19 app has advised you to self-isolate.

You will also be required to meet all the following criteria:

- you are employed or self-employed
- you cannot work from home and will lose income as a result
- you are claiming at least one of the following benefits:
 - Universal Credit
 - Working Tax Credits
 - income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
 - Income Support
 - Pension Credit or Housing Benefit

[Visit your local authority's website \(https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-local-help\)](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-local-help) for more information on the help and support that is available to you.

9.2 Additional support for those who lead a nomadic way of life

People who live on a traveller site, in a vehicle or on a canal boat may require additional support.

Let your site manager or local Gypsy and Traveller liaison team know if you need further support. If you are living on a river or canal, find out what advice is being offered by the organisation who manages the waterway you live on, as this varies for each one. Try to communicate by phone as much as possible to prevent spreading the virus to further contacts.

If you lack access to basic facilities such as water, sanitation and waste disposal to help with self-isolation, contact your local authority for assistance. They may be able to provide you with additional facilities or make alternative stopping places available.

The prevailing laws against [unauthorised encampments \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dealing-with-illegal-and-unauthorised-encampments\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dealing-with-illegal-and-unauthorised-encampments) or unauthorised development remain in place.

Waste should continue to be disposed of through authorised and legal means. Guidance for local authorities on re-opening or keeping household waste and recycling centres open is available. If you need further advice, contact your local authority.

If you are stopping or cruising in rural or isolated areas, take note of your location if you moor or pull up, especially if you are feeling unwell. You can also use the [what3words app \(https://what3words.com/gelbes.beinen.freudige\)](https://what3words.com/gelbes.beinen.freudige) if there is a medical emergency and you need services to come to you.

9.3 If you are breastfeeding

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, have tested positive or are living in a household with someone who has COVID-19, you may be concerned about the infection spreading to your baby if you are breastfeeding.

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. Talk to your midwife, health visitor or GP by telephone.

There is currently no evidence to suggest that the COVID-19 virus can be transmitted through breast milk. However, COVID-19 infection can be passed on to a baby in the same way as it can to anyone in close contact with you. The current evidence is that children with COVID-19 get much less severe symptoms than adults. If you or a family member are feeding with formula or expressed milk, sterilise the equipment carefully before each use. You should not share bottles or a breast pump with someone else.

9.4 People with learning disabilities, autism or serious mental illnesses

Not all these measures will be possible if you, or those you live with, have conditions such as learning disabilities, autism or serious mental illnesses. Follow this guidance to the best of your ability, while keeping yourself and those close to you safe and well, ideally in line with any existing care plans.

An [easy read \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance) version of this guidance is also available.

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