

1. Home (<https://www.gov.uk/>)
  2. COVID-19: guidance for young people on staying at home and away from others  
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others-guidance-for-young-people>)
1. Public Health  
England (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>)

Guidance

# **COVID-19: staying at home and away from others (social distancing) guidance for young people**

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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others-guidance-for-young-people/covid-19-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others-social-distancing-guidance-for-young-people>

COVID-19 is a new type of coronavirus that causes illness in people by affecting their lungs and therefore their breathing. It can be spread from person to person by coughing or touching surfaces or areas of skin that have been contaminated by the virus.

To stop COVID-19 spreading, everyone should be staying at home as much as possible, which you will hear being called 'social distancing'. Some people are strongly advised to stay home all the time – this is called 'shielding'. Guidance on shielding for extremely clinically vulnerable young people is available here (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-on-protecting-people-most-likely-to-get-unwell-from-coronavirus-shielding-young-peoples-version>).

This guide is about social distancing and what you can do while staying at home during this time.

Think about what you will need while you stay at home, like food and any regular medication you may be taking. If you are taking any medication, you (or your parent or carer) should contact your pharmacy to make a plan for how you will get hold of it while you are staying at home.

If you receive care or support from other people, this can still carry on while you are staying at home. You should avoid contact with anyone who is showing symptoms of COVID-19. These symptoms include:

- a high temperature
- a new and continuous cough, meaning coughing a lot for more than an hour or experiencing 3 or more episodes of coughing in a day

Some young people and adults have health conditions that mean they are more likely to get very unwell if they catch COVID-19. If you, or anyone you normally live with, is clinically vulnerable

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-on-protecting-people-most-likely-to-get-unwell-from-coronavirus-shielding-young-peoples-version>) you should take extra care to minimise contact with people from outside your household.

People are described as clinically vulnerable if they are:

1. aged 70 or older
2. under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (that is, anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):
  - chronic (long-term) mild to moderate respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
  - chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
  - chronic kidney disease
  - chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
  - chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), or cerebral palsy
  - diabetes
  - a weakened immune system due to conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets
  - seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)

- pregnant women

Some people young people and adults are described as extremely clinically vulnerable or shielding. If anyone who you normally live with is shielding, you will need to take extra action to help protect them as they are most likely to get very unwell and might have to go to hospital if they catch COVID-19. The list of adults and young people strongly advised to shield because they are extremely clinically vulnerable includes people who:

- have had a solid organ transplant – kidney, liver, pancreas, heart or lung
- are having treatments for some cancers
- have severe long-term lung disease, including cystic fibrosis and severe asthma
- have rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that increase their risk of infection
- are on medication that compromises their immune system and, so, are much more likely to get infections and become seriously unwell from them
- are pregnant with significant heart disease

## When you can go outside

You should only leave or be away from your home for very limited purposes. These include:

- shopping for food and medicine, but only when necessary
- one form of exercise a day, for example, a run, walk or cycle alone or with members of your household. If you (or a person in your care) have a specific health condition that requires you to leave your home to maintain your health (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do#can-i-exercise-more-than-once-a-day-if-i-need-to-due-to-a-significant-health-condition>), you can do so, but social distancing rules still apply (see below)
- any medical need, including to donate blood, to avoid or escape risk of injury or harm (for example, fleeing domestic abuse), to provide care or to help a vulnerable person
- if your parent or guardian is a critical worker (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>) or if you have a social worker or an education health care (EHC) plan, you are still allowed to go to school
- if you live across 2 families, because, for example, your parents live in different homes, you are allowed to move between both
- travelling for work purposes, but only where you cannot do this from home

These reasons are the main exceptions and a fuller list is set out in the law, which underpins these measures. (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/129/contents/made>) The law sets out clearly what you must and must not do – every person in the country must comply with this. The relevant authorities, including the police, have been given the powers to enforce the law – including through fines and dispersing gatherings.

Even when doing permitted activities, you should practise social distancing, which means maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (or 3 steps or 3 big steps for younger children) between yourself and anyone who is not from your household. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds using soap and water

when you return home.

Do not meet up with friends or family you do not live with. Most public places like youth centres, community centres, indoor sports centres, libraries, cinemas, cafes and restaurants are closed to support this. If your parent or guardian is a critical worker (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>), or if you have a social worker or an education health care (EHC) plan, you are still allowed to go to school.

## **Handwashing and personal hygiene**

There are general principles you can follow to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, including:

- washing your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after you blow your nose, sneeze or cough, before and after you eat or handle food and when you return home from being outside
- if soap and water is not available, you should use a hand sanitiser, but this should not replace proper handwashing
- avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- avoiding any contact with people who have symptoms of COVID-19 (they should be isolating if they show symptoms)

## **Work and education**

- if you work or are a student, you should be working or studying from home if possible
- you are allowed to go to school or access a childcare provider if your parents or guardians are critical workers, or if you have a social worker or an education health care (EHC) plan
- a list of critical workers is available (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>)

## **Looking after your wellbeing and keeping in contact with family and friends when staying at home**

There are lots of things you can do to help look after your mental and physical wellbeing. You may find social distancing frustrating or stressful. It can be hard to be away from your friends, change your normal routine and become less active.

Try to keep in touch with your friends and wider family. This might be on the phone, text, online or via video messaging and calling apps, so you can see their faces during this time. However, don't feel pressured to always use them, a text is okay, too, and do whatever you feel comfortable with.

Think about the things you would like to do while you stay at home. This might include, but is not limited to:

- watching films and television (catch up on things you haven't had time to watch)

- learning a new skill
- reading
- doing art or creative projects
- doing indoor or outdoor gardening if you have space, or growing and looking after plants indoors
- listening to music
- learning a new dance or song
- doing puzzles
- playing games
- tidying or rearranging your room
- cooking and baking
- doing any school, college or university work you might have
- exercising in your home or garden (look for ideas for exercise on the NHS website)

If you do not want to do any activities during this time, that is okay, too. You are not expected to use this time in any specific way and it is okay to not be as productive as usual. However, if you have been set schoolwork, you will be expected to continue to do that. There are some simple things that you can do to help your physical and mental wellbeing, including:

- trying to eat healthy meals and drink enough water
- spending time with the windows open to let in the fresh air, arranging space to sit and see a nice view (if possible) and get some natural sunlight
- spending time in the garden or other private outdoor space (if you have that) to get some sunlight, keeping at least 2 metres away from your neighbours if you are sitting on your doorstep
- limiting your time reading the news or being on social media, as this can make you feel more worried or anxious

Look at the advice and tips on these websites for young people if you feel like social distancing is affecting your mental health negatively.

- Rise Above (<https://riseabove.org.uk/tag/mental-health/>)
- Young Minds (<https://youngminds.org.uk/>)
- Shout (<https://www.giveusashout.org/resources/>)

## **Advice for young carers**

If you are caring for someone who is vulnerable, there are some simple steps that you can take to protect them and to reduce their risk at the current time.

Practise good handwashing and personal hygiene.

Find out about different sources of support that could be used and access further advice at Carers UK (<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/looking-after-your-health/coronavirus-covid-19>).

## **If you have divorced or separated parents**

If you live across 2 families, because, for example, your parents live in different homes, you can move between both.

You are not allowed to move between houses for any other reason, such as moving between home and student accommodation or any second homes. When moving between households, it is very important to follow the guidelines on handwashing and personal hygiene set out above in this document.

## **Accessing healthcare**

You should know what to do if you or someone you live with starts to feel unwell. If this happens you should:

- get advice from NHS 111 online (<https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>)
- use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services
- phone 999 if it is an emergency

You should not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital unless absolutely necessary. Services are still available for emergencies if you need them.

Mental health crisis services are also still available during this time. Visit Shout (<https://www.giveusashout.org/>) and Samaritans UK (<https://www.samaritans.org/>) for more information.

For a clear explanation on what services to access, refer to the ‘Which NHS service to use’ (<https://www.eastlondonhcp.nhs.uk/downloads/ourplans/Children/Guide%20for%20parents%20on%20which%20NHS%20service%20to%20use.pdf>) page.