

Coronavirus Questions, Answers and MythBusters

We realise that there is an awful lot of information about Coronavirus (Covid-19) out there and that it can be hard to know what to believe and how to make sense of it all. We have listened to your questions and have answered them below.

Stay up to date

Some of this guidance is only good at the time of writing (18 March 2020) and, whilst we'll do our best to keep it up to date, the most recent guidance can be found at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Stay At Home Guidance

“I’m confused about the self-isolation guidance!”

This is a common query. Self-isolation is now being called ‘stay at home’ and information can be found [here](#):

The symptoms of Coronavirus are:

- A high temperature – this is feeling hot to touch on your chest or back, or a temperature measured using a thermometer over or equal to 37.8°C
- A cough that you did not have before that has lasted more than a few hours.

If you have either one of these then you should stay at home for 7 days.

If there is anyone else that you live with, they need to stay home for 14 days from the day you first got symptoms.

If you live with anyone over the age of 70, someone who has a long-term health problem or who is pregnant, try to find somewhere else for them to stay. If this is not possible you need to try to keep away from each other as much as you can.

Most people get symptoms on about the fifth day of infection and often feel their worst around day nine. Some people have no symptoms at all! They can still pass the virus on to others so this is why the advice for other household members is to stay at home. Coronavirus is easily spread between people so to protect the others it is really important to follow this advice.

“Who do I need to tell if I am staying at home?”

You do not need to tell your GP, hospital or ring 111 to tell them you have symptoms. Tell your friends and family so that they know to check how you are doing and if you need anything.

Most people will be able to stay at home without needing to see a healthcare professional. Some people may need to see someone. If you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, feel you

are getting worse or are not starting feel better after 7 days then you need to use the [111 Coronavirus service](#).

If you work you will need to let your employer know. If you are eligible for statutory sick pay (SSP) this will start from the first day of your absence. Advice about this can be found [here](#).

Please note that you do not need a medicate certificate from your GP if you are following stay at home advice.

“I’m confused about the social distancing guidance!”

People who are over the age of 70, have a long term health problem or who are pregnant are being advised to take distancing measures as a precaution.

This is not the same as self-isolating or stay at home advice and can be found [here](#).

The reason these groups are being asked to do this is to try to slow the spread of Coronavirus and to stop groups of people who are most at risk of being seriously affected all becoming unwell at the same time.

Please note that you do not need a medicate certificate from your GP if you are following distancing advice.

If you are pregnant please don't be too alarmed by this advice. It is an entirely precautionary step as there is no evidence from what has been seen so far that mums and their babies are more at risk from Coronavirus. It's really important that you still go to your antenatal appointments and that once baby arrives they have their immunisations as usual. For more information click [here](#).

The term 'physical distancing' might be better suited than 'social distancing'. It's really important for us to keep in touch with our friends and family and those than might get lonely. If you know someone is low or anxious make sure you check in with them – a message or call to let someone know you are thinking of them goes a long way. Video and telephone calls are a great way to keep in touch and there are some good ideas about how to avoid anxiety and feeling alone:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

<https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/blog/coronavirus-and-social-isolation/>

[Local information and local] Facebook page has lots of information about local support and some great educational and entertainment ideas to help if you're facing a stint at home with the kids!

If you are observing distancing measures remember that you can still go out for a walk – staying 2 metres away from others.

Normal Appointments and Medication

“When can I book an appointment at the surgery?”

All GP surgeries have been asked to speak to people over the telephone first whenever possible to reduce the number of people coming into the surgery and spreading Coronavirus. We will try to sort what we can out for you over the telephone. We can offer you a secure video call and are able to ask you to send a photograph of things like rashes to a secure email address if needed.

Please be reassured that if once we've spoken to you we think we need to see you in person then we absolutely will do – even if we're worried you might have Coronavirus we will wear protective clothing to examine you.

You will be able to have things like blood tests and immunisations, but we will need to check that you do not have Coronavirus symptoms before you come in to the surgery.

We don't know when things will return to normal but, as ever, are keen to have your feedback about how the system is working. Some of you have told us you have liked being able to speak on the telephone – and the doctors have commented how much they miss seeing lots of patients in person!

“Do I need to order more medication?”

It is unnerving to think that you might run out of important medication – especially having seen supermarkets stripped of loo roll and baked beans! We will send any prescriptions we can electronically to the pharmacy to avoid unnecessary trips into the surgery. The supply of prescribed medication is not currently under threat – but we do need to be careful and sensible.

Please do not order extra medication or request items that you have not needed for years 'just in case'. If there is a short term supply problem this might mean that you have too much medication and somebody else has none.

We need to look after our pharmacies as they will be struggling with staff absences and keeping up with orders.

Please think of those who are observing the stay at home or distancing guidance and offer to collect and drop off medication for them if you are making a trip anyway.

“Is it safe to take ibuprofen?”

If you need to control your fever or aches and pains caused by Coronavirus it is better to use paracetamol than ibuprofen.

If you are already taking an anti-inflammatory medication such as ibuprofen for another condition you should not stop taking it.

This is the current advice and this query is being looked at by experts, but there has been a lot on social media about this issue. If you prefer to look at the current information for yourself there are links at the end of this document.

“I’ve heard some blood pressure tablets aren’t safe to take with Coronavirus?”

There have been lots of rumours about blood pressure medications known as ACE inhibitors such as Ramipril and Enalapril and angiotensin receptor blockers such as Candesartan and Valsartan. If you are prescribed these medications please do not stop taking them, even if you have symptoms of Coronavirus. This is the advice of from several professional bodies*.

Treating and Testing For Coronavirus

“Can Coronavirus be treated?”

There is not a medicine or treatment that can cure Coronavirus. Your immune system is currently the only thing that can do this! Antibiotics do not work because it is a virus. People who need to go to hospital because they are severely affected usually need help with their breathing whilst the body tries to recover or because they develop issues relating to another long term health problem.

“How can I get a test for Coronavirus?”

You cannot currently get a test from your GP. Only people who are admitted to hospital with a suspected case are being tested at the moment. The test used is either a swab (like a long cotton bud) taken from the nose and throat or a blood test. If you are staying at home because you have symptoms of Coronavirus, you do not need a test because the result will not change the advice you are given.

“Can I get a test privately?”

Yes you can, but it will not change the advice you are given. Companies are offering to post you swab kits that you can use yourself at home then post back for analysis. These cost nearly £400 and unfortunately do still miss cases.

“Can I get an injection to protect me from Coronavirus?”

There is no vaccine right now for Coronavirus. It is likely to take over a year to make a vaccine safe for us to use.

“Does having my flu jab make a difference?”

Your flu vaccine does not give you any protection against Coronavirus – but it does protect you against flu so was definitely worth having!

Out and About

“Can I go to a wedding or a funeral?”

- If you are self-isolating because you or somebody in your household has symptoms of Coronavirus then the answer is no, you should not leave the house to attend.
- If you are putting in distancing measures because of your age, other health problems or pregnancy, you need to be mindful of how large the gathering is and how close you will be to others. Please look at the link about distancing [here](#).
- Larger social gatherings are being discouraged for everyone now, so most venues will limit how many people can attend or will postpone the event.

If you cannot attend an event such as this it may be very disappointing or upsetting for you.

Lots of funeral providers offer a video link to watch the service from home – you need a computer, tablet or smart phone connected to the internet for this and if for some reason you cannot watch it live you can usually view it for a week or so afterwards. Many wedding ceremonies are videoed too and, for those that are not postponing their big day, the option of watching this online is being made available too.

“Can I visit my elderly relatives and friends?”

The answer to this one depends too:

- If you are self-isolating because you or somebody in your household has symptoms of Coronavirus then the answer is no, you should not leave the house to attend.
- If you or the other person are putting in distancing measures because of your age, other health problems or pregnancy, you should limit the contact you have with others as per the distancing guidance [here](#).

“Can I go to the gym?”

At the moment, yes you can. Most gyms are limiting the size of their classes and moving equipment further apart or blocking alternate machines. Remember to wash your hands before having a drink or touching your face. If you can exercise outdoors this is a great option.

“What do I do if I cannot get hand sanitiser?”

Please don't worry if you don't have or can't get hold of hand sanitiser. Soap and water are absolutely fine and are easy to get hold of. The most important thing is to avoid touching your face, cover your mouth if you cough or sneeze and to make sure you wash your hands before you put any food or drink into your mouth. Handwashing advice can be found [here](#).

“Can I support my local pub by going?”

We have all been advised to avoid going to the pub. For many this will be a very sad announcement! It is a very sensible one though. There might be ways you can support local pubs and businesses though if you're worried about how they'll get through the coming months:

- Buy a giftcard or voucher: If this isn't already on offer suggest it! Buying directly from the pub or business means their cashflow is at least in part maintained and you'll be back later in the year.
- Local breweries are suffering from a lack of pub orders and having to close their tap rooms, so (of course sticking to recommended limits) you could order from them rather than going to the supermarket.
- Restaurants and pubs are starting to offer 'takeaway' options for their food so ask about this.

“Should I wear gloves/a mask to go shopping?”

You can wear gloves if you like but they will make no difference if you still touch your face. You should still wash your hands with soap and water once you have taken them off. Masks do not offer significant protection – and some studies suggest they make you more likely to touch your face when fiddling with them! Even in healthcare settings their use is limited and they need to be very tight fitting and to be changed regularly to be effective.

Further Information

Anti-Inflammatories and Covid-19

<https://www.cas.mhra.gov.uk/ViewandAcknowledgment/ViewAlert.aspx?AlertID=103001>

<https://www.bmj.com/content/368/bmj.m1086>

<https://www.cebm.net/oxford-covid-19/covid-19-registered-trials-and-analysis/>

*Professional bodies advising on blood pressure medication in Covid-19:

Society	Summary of recommendations	Last Statement Update
European Society of Hypertension	Recommend continuing ACEis/ARBs due to lack of evidence to support differential use in COVID-19 patients. In those with severe symptoms or sepsis, antihypertensive decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis taking into account current guidelines	March 12, 2020
European Society of Cardiology Council on Hypertension	Strongly encourage continuing ACEis/ARBs due to lack of evidence to support discontinuing	March 13, 2020
Hypertension Canada	Recommend continuing ACEis/ARBs due to lack of evidence that patients with hypertension or those treated with ACEis/ARBs are at higher risk of adverse outcomes from COVID-19 infection	March 13, 2020
Canadian Cardiovascular Society	Strongly encourage continuing ACEis/ARBs and Angiotensin Receptor Nephilysin Inhibitors due to a lack of clinical evidence to support withdrawal of these agents	March 15, 2020
The Renal Association, United Kingdom	Strongly encourage continuing ACEis/ARBs due to unconvincing evidence that these medications increase risk	March 15, 2020
International Society of Hypertension	Strongly recommend that the routine use of ACEis/ARBs to treat hypertension should not be influenced by concerns about COVID-19 in the absence of compelling data that ACEis/ARBs either improve or worsen susceptibility to COVID-19 infection nor do they affect the outcomes of those infected	March 16, 2020
American College of Physicians	Encourage continuing ACEis/ARBs because there is no evidence linking them to COVID-19 disease severity, and discontinuation of antihypertensive therapy without medical indication could in some circumstances result in harm	March 16, 2020
Spanish Society of Hypertension	Recommend that ACEis/ARBs should not be empirically stopped in patients who are already taking them; in seriously ill patients, changes should be made on a case-by-case basis	March 16, 2020
American Heart Association, Heart Failure Society of America, American College of Cardiology	Recommend continuing ACEis/ARBs for all patients already prescribed them	March 17, 2020
European Renal Association - European Dialysis and Transplant Association	Recommend continuing ACEis/ARBs in COVID-19 infection patients due to a lack of evidence to support differential use and the discontinuation of ACEis/ARBs in COVID-19 patients	March 17, 2020