



FAQs

(Updated 17th March 2020 22:14)

The worldwide spread of Coronavirus is a rapidly evolving situation and one which Liverpool is working with partners in the NHS and other public services to develop contingencies for locally.

One Barnstaple meets regularly with its partners to discuss the potential risks and impacts and are well-prepared to respond to any potential incident. They are working closely with partners to share and communicate accurate information in a timely manner.

What is coronavirus?

Coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world but this is a new strain which has developed called COVID-19.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The symptoms are a high temperature and a new, continuous cough but can also include sneezing and shortage of breath.

In some cases, this may progress to a severe pneumonia causing shortness of breath and breathing difficulties.

Generally, coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

How does this new coronavirus spread – I'm concerned I could catch it?

Because it's a new illness, we do not know exactly how it spreads from person to person, but similar viruses spread by cough droplets or sneeze droplets.

How long any respiratory virus survives will depend on a number of factors, for example:

- what surface the virus is on (e.g: hard or soft)
- whether it is exposed to sunlight
- differences in temperature and humidity
- exposure to cleaning products

Under most circumstances, the amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surfaces is likely to have decreased significantly by 24 hours, and even more so by 48 hours.

Can the virus survive on cargo that has arrived from an affected area?

There is currently no evidence to suggest that the virus can be transmitted from post or packages.

What can I do to reduce my risk of catching coronavirus?

The best way to protect ourselves from infections like coronavirus is to wash our hands frequently for 20 seconds with soap and water or use a sanitiser gel, as well as always carrying tissues and using them to catch coughs and sneezes, then putting the tissue in a bin.

There are things you can do to help stop germs like coronavirus spreading:

- always carry tissues with you and use them to catch your cough or sneeze. Then bin the tissue, and wash your hands, or use a sanitiser gel
- wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after using public transport. Use a sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid close contact with people who are unwell

If you are concerned that you are unwell or unsure about your symptoms, the NHS advice line is 111.

Should people wear face masks to protect themselves from infection?

We do not recommend face masks. Whilst they play a very important role in clinical settings, such as hospitals but there's very little evidence of widespread benefit from their use outside of these clinical settings.

Face masks must be worn correctly, changed frequently, removed properly and disposed of safely in order to be effective.

Coronavirus in our area

The government has now moved us to the 'delay' phase in the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

- [Read the stay at home guidance on GOV.UK](#)

The main messages are:

- if you live alone and you have symptoms of coronavirus illness (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home for 7 days from when your symptoms started – see ending isolation section for more information
- if you live with others and you or one of them have symptoms of coronavirus, then all 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
- it is likely that people living within a household will infect each other or be infected already. Staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community
- for anyone in the household who starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14-day isolation period. (See ending isolation section for more information)
- if you can, move any vulnerable individuals (such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions) out of your home, to stay with friends or family for the duration of the home isolation period
- if you cannot move vulnerable people out of your home, stay away from them as much as possible

if you have coronavirus symptoms:

- do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital
- you do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home
- testing for coronavirus is not needed if you're staying at home
- plan ahead and ask others for help to ensure that you can successfully stay at home and consider what can be done for vulnerable people in the household
- ask your employer, friends and family to help you to get the things you need to stay at home
- wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds, each time using soap and water, or use hand sanitiser
- if you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, or your condition gets worse, or your symptoms do not get better after 7 days, then use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service. If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999

[View more information and advice about on self-isolation on GOV.UK.](#)

Social distancing

This guidance is for everyone. It advises on social distancing measures we should all be taking to reduce social interaction between people in order to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). It is intended for use in situations where people are living in their own homes, with or without additional support from friends, family and carers. If you live in a residential care setting – guidance is available at [residential care setting](#).

We are advising those who are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures.

This group includes those who are:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):
- chronic (long-term) 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 \(MS\)](#), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
- [diabetes](#)
- problems with your spleen – for example, [sickle cell](#) disease or if you have had your spleen removed
- a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as [HIV and AIDS](#), or medicines such as [steroid tablets](#) or [chemotherapy](#)
- being seriously overweight (a BMI of 40 or above)
- those who are pregnant

There are some clinical conditions which put people at even higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. If you are in this category, next week the NHS in England will directly contact you with advice the more stringent measures you should take in order to keep yourself and others safe. For now, you should rigorously follow the social distancing advice in full, outlined below.

People falling into this group are those who may be at particular risk due to complex health problems such as people with:

- an organ transplant who remain on ongoing immuno-suppression medication
- cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radiotherapy
- cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia who are at any stage of treatment
- severe chest conditions such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma (requiring hospital admissions or courses of steroid tablets)
- severe diseases of body systems, such as severe kidney disease (dialysis)

What is social distancing?

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce the social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

They are:

1. Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough.
2. Avoid non-essential use of public transport, varying your travel times to avoid rush hour, when possible;
3. Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to [employer guidance](#) for more information.
4. Avoid large gatherings, and gatherings in smaller public spaces such as pubs, cinemas, restaurants, theatres, bars, clubs.
5. Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.
6. Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services.

Everyone should be trying to follow these measures as much as is pragmatic.

For those who are over 70, have an underlying health condition or are pregnant, we strongly advise you to follow the above measures as much as you can, and to significantly limit your face-to-face interaction with friends and family if possible.

This advice is likely to be in place for some weeks.

How can I get assistance with foods and medicines if I am reducing my social contacts?

Ask family, friends and neighbours to support you and use online services. If this is not possible, then the public sector, business, charities, and the general public are gearing up to help those advised to stay at home. It is important to speak to others and ask them to help you to make arrangements for the delivery of food, medicines and essential services and supplies, and look after your physical and mental health and wellbeing.

If you receive support from health and social care organisations, for example if you have care provided for you through the local authority or health care system, this will continue as normal. Your health or social care provider will be asked to take additional precautions to make sure that you are protected. The advice for formal carers is included in the [Home care provision](#).

What should you do if you have hospital and GP appointments during this period?

We advise everyone to access medical assistance remotely, wherever possible. However, if you have a scheduled hospital or other medical appointment during this period, talk to your GP or clinician to ensure you continue to receive the care you need and consider whether appointments can be postponed.

What is the advice for visitors including those who are providing care for you?

You should contact your regular social visitors such as friends and family to let them know that you are reducing social contacts and that they should not visit you during this time, unless they are providing essential care for you. Essential care includes things like help with washing, dressing, or preparing meals.

If you receive regular health or social care from an organisation, either through your local authority or paid for by yourself, inform your care providers that you are reducing social contacts and agree a plan for continuing your care.

If you receive essential care from friends or family members, speak to your carers about extra precautions they can take to keep you safe. You may find this guidance on [Home care provision](#) useful.

It is also a good idea to speak to your carers about what happens if one of them becomes unwell. If you need help with care but you're not sure who to contact, or if you do not have family or friends who can help you, you can contact your local council who should be able to help you.

What is the advice if I live with a vulnerable person?

If you live in a house with a vulnerable person refer to our [household guidance](#).

How do you look after your mental wellbeing?

Understandably, you may find that social distancing can be boring or frustrating. You may find your mood and feelings are affected and you may feel low, worried or have problems sleeping and you might miss being outside with other people.

At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour which in turn can make you feel worse. There are simple things you can do that may help, to stay mentally and physically active during this time such as:

- Look for ideas of exercises you can do at home on the [NHS website](#).
- Spend time doing things you enjoy – this might include reading, cooking, other indoor hobbies or listening to/watching favourite radio or TV programmes.
- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water, exercise regularly, and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs.
- Keep your windows open to let in fresh air, get some natural sunlight if you can, or get outside into the garden. You can also go for a walk outdoors if you stay more than 2 metres from others.

Further information on looking after your mental health during this time is available.

What steps can you take to stay connected with family and friends during this time?

Draw on support you might have through your friends, family and other networks during this time. Try to stay in touch with those around you over the phone, by post, or online. Let people know how you would like to stay in touch and build that into your routine. This is also important in looking after your mental wellbeing and you may find it helpful to talk to them about how you are feeling.

Remember it is OK to share your concerns with others you trust and in doing so you may end up providing support to them too. Or you can use a [NHS recommended helpline](#).

What is the advice for informal 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. Ensure you follow advice on good hygiene such as:

- Wash your hands on arrival and often, using soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze.
- Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards.
- Do not visit if you are unwell and make alternative arrangements for their care.
- Provide information on who they should call if they feel unwell, how to use NHS 111 online coronavirus service and leave the number for NHS 111 prominently displayed.
- Find out about different sources of support that could be used and access further advice on creating a contingency plan is available from [Carers UK](#).
- Look after your own well-being and physical health during this time.