

Coronavirus guidance for people who provide unpaid care to family and friends

This guidance is for anyone who provides unpaid care for a family member or friend who cannot cope without their support. This may be due to the person having a lifelong condition, illness (including dementia), disability, serious injury, mental health condition or an addiction.

This guidance explains how to provide this care in ways to minimise the risk from coronavirus (COVID-19). All the information was correct at the time of writing (27 August 2020).

Contents

Who are the clinically ‘vulnerable groups’ and clinically ‘extremely vulnerable groups’ in relation to coronavirus infection?	3
General advice	3
Protecting yourself and the person you care for	4
Caring for someone who is clinically ‘extremely vulnerable’	5
If the person you care for is concerned about their usual paid carer coming in and out of their home and the risk of infection	6
Face coverings and protective clothing (PPE)	6
Wearing a face covering if you have to go out	6
If the person you care for is in a care home	7
Maintaining your own health and wellbeing while caring for others	7
Accessing alternative care quickly if you cannot provide care	8
If you need time off work to care for someone who has coronavirus symptoms or is self-isolating	8
Collecting prescriptions if you’re self-isolating	8
If you or the person you care for has coronavirus symptoms	9
Information on cleaning and hygiene when caring for someone with symptoms	10
If you or the person you care for has been shielding	11
If transmission of COVID-19 increases	11
Local restrictions	11

Who are the clinically 'vulnerable groups' and clinically 'extremely vulnerable groups' in relation to coronavirus infection?

Clinically vulnerable people are those who are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus infection. This group includes:

- those who are aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions);
- those under 70 with a specified, underlying health condition (for adults, this usually means anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds);
- pregnant women.

People with dementia of any age are also at high risk of getting the virus. Following these guidelines may therefore be helpful.

Information for people with clinical conditions at even higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus is in the updated [guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable \(shielded\) groups](#).

As a carer who looks after someone, it is also important that you look after yourself.

General advice

What should carers be doing to prepare?

Where you or the person you care for have no symptoms then please refer to the guidance on hygiene on the [NHS website](#).

You may wish to create an emergency plan with the person you care for, to use where care or support from other people may be needed. Depending on the situation, this could be help from family or friends, health or social care services.

In order to create an emergency plan that fits the needs of the person you care for you will need to set out:

- the name and address and any other contact details of the person you look after;
- your name and address and contact details;

- anyone else who you and the person you look after would like to be contacted in an emergency;
- details of any medication the person you look after is taking;
- details of any ongoing treatment they need;
- details of any medical appointments they need to keep;
- details of their GP and pharmacy;
- any care and support services they receive.

You should make sure that the emergency plan can be easily shared with other people who may need to see the plan.

Further information can be found at [Carers UK](#).

You may be able to arrange help and support from family and friends, but it can be reassuring to have the involvement of your [local authority](#) or [healthcare provider](#) in case these care arrangements fall through. It may also be helpful to contact your local carers support organisation who can help with contingency planning. You can find out about local carer organisations at [Carers UK](#).

You can also find information out about local services on the [Carers Trust website](#).

[Protecting yourself and the person you care for](#)

Keep up to date with announcements and advice on GOV.UK and follow the latest advice set out in the [guidance on staying alert and safe \(social distancing\)](#), which includes tips on how to help protect a vulnerable person you live with.

Cleaning your hands often throughout the day by washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using hand sanitiser will help protect you and the people you live with. This step is one of the most effective ways of reducing the risk of infection for you and other people. This includes if you have been out, or when you arrive at the home of the person you care for, if you do not live with them.

Caring for someone who is clinically 'extremely vulnerable'

The [guidance on shielding and protecting the clinically extremely vulnerable](#) people from coronavirus gives more details about caring for someone. But from 1 August 2020 this guidance has been stopped. People in this group no longer need to carry out the shielding advice from their GP or specialist, but should still maintain practical ways on keeping safe:

- wash your hands often for 20 seconds more often;
- cover your face in shops and other enclosed settings and;
- social distancing or making space of 2 metres (6 feet or about the length of a double bed) between yourself and other people you meet from outside your household.

If you are caring for someone who falls into the clinically 'extremely vulnerable' category for risk of severe illness from coronavirus, you should continue these simple steps to protect them and to reduce their risk:

- only provide essential care, such as washing, giving medication, help getting dressed and preparing meals;
- wash your hands when you arrive at the home of the person you care for and frequently thereafter, using soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use a 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 the [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 an emergency plan from [Carers UK](#)

If the person you care for is concerned about their usual paid carer coming in and out of their home and the risk of infection

The government has issued guidance to home care providers to ensure that appropriate levels of hygiene are achieved to reduce the risk of infection. Speak to the care provider about the processes they are following to maintain good hygiene.

If the person you care for receives regular health or social care from an organisation, either through your local authority or paid for by themselves, inform their care provider that they are reducing social contact and agree on a plan for continuing their care.

As a carer, the [guidance](#) on keeping safe (e.g. making space between yourself and others) provides advice on the extra precautions you can take to help keep the person you care for safe.

[Face coverings and protective clothing \(PPE\)](#)

You do not need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when delivering care unless advised to do so by a healthcare professional, like a GP, or nurse.

You should continue to follow advice in this guidance and the [guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from coronavirus](#) on how to protect yourself and those you care for.

The government is constantly reviewing the situation so the [guidance](#) may change. Have a look at the guidance if you are unsure what to do.

[Wearing a face covering if you have to go out](#)

You should wear a face covering in enclosed public spaces where social distancing (making space between yourself and others) is not possible and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet. [Guidance on face coverings is available on GOV.UK](#). You must wear a face covering on public transport and when you go to the shops. The person you care for must also wear a face covering but certain people are exempt if they have a health condition or disability that makes wearing one difficult.

It is important to use face coverings properly and wash your hands before putting them on and taking them off. You can [make face coverings at home](#). The key thing is that it should cover the mouth and nose.

[If the person you care for is in a care home](#)

If you have no symptoms, you should keep in contact with the care home to understand any local arrangement about keeping in touch with residents and follow the [guidance from the care home when visiting](#).

[Maintaining your own health and wellbeing while caring for others](#)

It is important that you look after your own health and wellbeing as well as supporting others you care for. This is because of the potential for additional stresses at the current time and reduced access to support such as respite care. There is information in the [Stay at home guidance](#) and the [guidance on keeping safe](#) about looking after your wellbeing, as well as more detailed guidance on self-care and sources of support for [mental health and wellbeing during the outbreak](#).

Tips include taking care of your mind as well as your body and getting support if you need it. Daily physical activity is important for health and wellbeing, including managing stress, and encouraging positive feelings and better sleep. You can look for ideas of [exercises you can do at home](#) from Public Health England (PHE). If you care for someone with dementia you can find more information here.

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.

There are sources of support and information that can help, such as the [Every Mind Matters website](#).

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 an [NHS recommended helpline](#).

It may also be helpful to contact your local carers support organisation who can help with contingency planning. You can find out about local carer organisations at the [Carers Trust](#) or [Carers UK](#). There is also an [online forum on Carers UK](#).

[Accessing alternative care quickly if you cannot provide care](#)

Having to organise alternative care can be difficult and concerning. Where possible, you should contact friends and family who may be able to give immediate help in providing care. You should follow the guidelines set out in the [Stay at home guidance](#) and the [guidance on staying safe](#) to protect those coming into the home of the person who needs care.

If you cannot organise alternative care you can contact your [local authority](#) or [healthcare provider](#).

If you do not know how to do this, you can contact NHS 111.

[If you need time off work to care for someone who has coronavirus symptoms or is self-isolating](#)

You should talk to your employer about your caring needs and what arrangements can be put in place. Information regarding statutory sick pay entitlements can be found in the [Guidance for employees](#).

Some people may be entitled to benefits as a carer, such as Carer's Allowance. You should check on [GOV.UK](#) for further details.

[Collecting prescriptions if you're self-isolating](#)

If you normally collect prescriptions for the person you care for, you will not be able to do this if you are self-isolating. Most pharmacies provide a home delivery service. Telephone them to see if this is available or if there is another scheme running locally to help you access prescriptions.

You can also get help from [NHS Volunteer Responders](#) with collecting medication or shopping. Call 0808 196 3646 between 8am and 8pm.

Pharmacy delivery services will be under pressure, so it is important that you order your repeat prescriptions in good time, to avoid delays in dispensing. Information on repeat prescriptions and delivery services may also be available via your GP practice website.

[If you or the person you care for has coronavirus symptoms](#)

- **If the person you care for has symptoms**

The person you care for has symptoms, and you are not in a clinically ‘vulnerable group’ or clinically ‘extremely vulnerable group’ with increased risk of severe illness

If someone in your household has symptoms you should follow the [Stay at home guidance](#) which states that if you live alone and you have coronavirus symptoms, however mild, you should stay at home for 10 days from when their symptoms started or until you are better, whichever is the longer.

You should [get a test to check if you have coronavirus](#). Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy, or hospital.

It might not be easy to follow the [stay at home guidance](#) when you provide close contact care, such as washing and bathing, for a family member or friend.

If you do not fall into the ‘clinically vulnerable’ group or the ‘clinically extremely vulnerable’ group, you can continue to provide care. You should review the above guidelines and take steps to protect yourself and others in the household as best you can by following advice on hygiene and distancing where possible.

- **If you are a carer and you have symptoms**

How to get tested

Carers providing unpaid care are listed as essential workers and those prioritised for testing. If you have symptoms of coronavirus you can [get a test](#) for yourself to see if you have the virus. Or on behalf of someone you care for.

If someone in your household has symptoms you should follow the [stay at home guidance](#). This states that if you live alone and you have symptoms of coronavirus, however mild, you must self-isolate at home for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started or until you are better, whichever is the longer.

If you live with others and you are the first in the household to have symptoms of coronavirus, then you must stay at home for 10 days. All other household members who remain well must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days.

The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill. For anyone else in the household who starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for 10 days from when their symptoms appeared – or until their symptoms have gone, whichever is the longer – regardless of what day they are on in the original 14-day isolation period.

However, we appreciate that this may not be easy to achieve where you provide close contact care, such as washing and bathing, for a spouse or relative.

If you care for someone in the clinically ‘vulnerable group’ or the clinically ‘extremely vulnerable group’ do not visit them if you are unwell and make alternative arrangements for their care with other family members and friends. If you cannot organise alternative care you can contact your [local authority](#) or [NHS trust](#).

If you care for a person in a ‘clinically extremely vulnerable’ group, you should avoid contact with the person you care for and ask friends and family for help to support you in providing care, where possible. You can also get help from NHS Volunteer Responders by calling 0808 196 3646 (between 8am and 8pm).

You should distance yourself from the person you care for as much as possible and follow the above guidance.

If you cannot organise alternative care you can contact your [local authority](#) or [healthcare provider](#). If you do not know how to do this, you can contact NHS 111. It may also be helpful to contact your local carers support organisation. You can find out about local carer organisations at [Carers UK](#).

[Information on cleaning and hygiene when caring for someone with symptoms](#)

The [Stay at home guidance](#) provides information on washing your hands, cleaning and disposing of waste, and cleaning laundry, as well as other information for those living with a vulnerable person.

[If you or the person you care for has been shielding](#)

The guidance for people who are shielding stopped on the 4 August. This means that people who are ‘clinically extremely vulnerable’ can go outside as much as they like but should still:

- keep their social interactions low
- keep 2 metres (6 feet, or the length of a double bed) away from others wherever possible, or 1 metre plus other precautions (e.g. wearing a face mask)

For more information on what has changed see the [guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19](#).

You should continue to:

- wash your hands carefully and more often than usual
- maintain thorough cleaning of frequently touched areas in your home or workspace

For more information on staying safe see the guidance on how to [stay safe outside your home](#).

[If transmission of COVID-19 increases](#)

Those who were advised to shield before may be advised to shield again if the situation changes and there is an increase in the transmission of coronavirus in the community.

NHS Digital will keep a shielded person's name securely on the shielded patient list. They will write to you if the advice changes. Any national changes will be reflected in this guidance.

[Local restrictions](#)

In some areas there are stricter rules in place because of a rise in the number of coronavirus cases in that area.

If you're clinically extremely vulnerable, you should not enter any area where shielding advice is in place.

See [information about which areas have local restrictions and what you can and cannot do in each area](#).

For more information please refer to the Government guidance on coronavirus <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>