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Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do

Stay at home

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

[Hide message](#)

[Home](#) > [Coronavirus: How to help safely](#)



Cabinet Office

Guidance

Coronavirus: How to help safely

Published 26 March 2020

Contents

1. [Can I help?](#)
2. [Who can I help?](#)
3. [How can I help safely?](#)
4. [What can I do?](#)
5. [What should I do if I'm worried about someone's health?](#)
6. [How to stay safe when accepting help from others](#)
7. [Volunteering](#)
8. [NHS Volunteer responders](#)

The single most important action we can all take, in fighting coronavirus, is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives.

[Full guidance on staying at home and away from others can be found on gov.uk](#)

You should only leave the house for one of four reasons, and one of these is to provide care or to help a vulnerable person. Even when you are doing this, you need to do so safely. You should be minimising time spent outside of the home and ensuring you are 2 metres (6 feet) apart from anyone outside of your household.

This guidance outlines how you can help and importantly, how to do this safely.

If you live in Scotland, go to [Ready Scotland](#) for the latest information. If you live in Wales go to [gov.wales/safe-help](#) or [llyw.cymru/iachadiogel](#) for the latest information.

1. Can I help?

You can only provide support to people who are in isolation if you fulfil ALL of the conditions below:

- You are well and have no symptoms like a cough or high temperature and nobody in your household does
- You are under 70
- You are not pregnant
- You do not have any long-term health conditions that make you vulnerable to coronavirus.

2. Who can I help?

You can help households who are isolating. This could include friends and family members as well as your neighbours.

If you want to help in your local community, but don't know how, further information can be found in the details below.

Always remember, you should only provide support in person where it is essential for the health or care of a vulnerable person.

3. How can I help safely?

The single most important action we can all take, in fighting coronavirus, is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives.

When we reduce our day-to-day contact with other people, we will reduce the spread of the infection and save lives. This remains the case when you are helping others.

You should not go inside the homes of anyone you do not live with, especially vulnerable people or people who believe they may be infected and are isolating themselves. Breaking these rules could put you at risk of infection, or risk spreading it to others.

If you are picking things up for others, try to limit the amount of time you spend outside of your home by picking up essential items for them when you do your own shopping or collect their medicines during the same trip.

You should stay 2m or six feet away from anyone you do not live with at all times. Do not share a car journey with them.

You should also regularly wash your hands with soapy water for at least 20 seconds.

If you have offered to help other people, please do not place yourself in positions where you may feel unsafe, for instance helping late at night.

You must also always adhere to our advice on how to stay safe.

If you or someone in your household has shown symptoms, or if you are more vulnerable to coronavirus yourself, then you must stay home. You still play an important role but will need to do this from home.

4. What can I do?

There are many ways you can help friends or family as well as neighbours who are in isolation.

4.1 Help with food shopping

If people staying at home because of coronavirus need basic necessities, you could do this yourself and leave the groceries on the person's doorstep. Try to limit the amount of time you spend outside of your home by picking up essential items for others only when you do your own shopping.

Or you could help those who aren't as familiar with online shopping by placing an order for them or by talking them through the process over the phone.

4.2 Collecting medication

You can pick up medicines on someone else's behalf. People should only request medication that they need, in their usual quantities. Remember to keep a safe distance when leaving any items on the person's doorstep or drop off area, and make sure that they have collected the medication before leaving.

4.3 Stay in touch over the phone or via social media

Staying at home for a long time can be a lonely experience and may impact on people's wellbeing. Just saying hello and regularly checking in over the phone or by video-chat is important, or you could help people by recommending information from organisations like [Every Mind Matters](#).

4.4 Encourage people to stay mentally and physically active

People who have experienced staying at home have kept themselves busy with activities such as cooking, reading, online learning or watching films. Swap suggestions about how people you are supporting can keep themselves busy. If people are well enough, encourage them to do some light exercise and keep active around the home, perhaps by using an online exercise class.

4.5 Share trusted sources of information

It's easy to become worried by online information, some of which may be deliberately designed to mislead people. Help your community by sharing trusted information from the [NHS](#), [Public Health England](#) or the [Department of Health and Social Care](#).

5. What should I do if I'm worried about someone's health?

Encourage anyone you are in touch with or supporting to use the [NHS 111 online Coronavirus service](#). They should only call 111 if they can't get online, their symptoms worsen or they have been instructed to. Call 999 if you believe someone's life is at risk.

6. How to stay safe when accepting help from others

Please refer to [guidance on staying at home](#).

If you are receiving voluntary help do not share financial details like credit/debit card numbers or personal information.

If someone you don't know calls at your home, always ask for ID and always ensure you are comfortable sharing details like your phone number or address. Only provide information on a need to know basis and if you have seen ID. Do not feel pressured into providing information. If you have doubts about those who are approaching you, and are concerned, it is advised that you don't engage, and report serious suspicious behaviour to the police.

Remember that genuine volunteers have been instructed not to enter your home.

7. Volunteering

Volunteering will be crucial in the response to coronavirus and people have not been stopped from doing this.

However, volunteering that requires going out of the house is now only permitted in certain circumstances. If you are well and are not at risk from coronavirus you can undertake essential activities including:

- Delivering food
- Helping people with their medical needs, such as picking up prescriptions
- Providing essential care or to help a vulnerable person or person(s), including through essential public and voluntary services, such as food banks, homeless services, and blood donation sessions

Voluntary organisations are supporting people across the UK in this time of high need, providing practical, emotional and social support.

You can find local volunteering opportunities by visiting [Do-IT](#), [Volunteering Matters](#), or [Reach Volunteering](#).

You could approach your [local volunteer centre](#), or find your local member of the [National Association for Voluntary and Community Action](#).

Visit [Volunteering Wales](#) to find volunteering opportunities in Wales. Visit [Volunteer Scotland](#) to find volunteering opportunities in Scotland.

For more information on what sort of help is most needed and how to help safely please see the guidance above.

8. NHS Volunteer responders

8.1 Temporary pause in recruitment to NHS Volunteer Responders

Recruitment to this scheme was temporarily paused on 29 March 2020 to process the initial 750,000 applications. Further information will follow.

8.2 What is the NHS Volunteer Responders?

NHS Volunteer Responders is a new group set up by the NHS in England. It will carry out simple, non-medical tasks to support people in England who have been asked to shield themselves from coronavirus because of underlying health conditions. They will be used by healthcare professionals to make sure people who are highly vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19) are able to stay safe and well at home.

8.3 Who can join and what are the tasks?

The NHS and social care need people to join the NHS Volunteer Responders to do simple but vital tasks including driving people to and from hospital, and delivering food and medication. Volunteers will also support the NHS to transport equipment and supplies, and make regular phone calls to check on people isolating at home.

Please note, to comply with the UK's current 'Stay at Home' rules you can only volunteer to carry out those tasks which involve leaving your home if you fulfil ALL of the conditions below:

- You are well and have no symptoms like a cough or high temperature and neither does anybody in your household
- You are under 70
- You are not pregnant
- You do not have any long-term health conditions that make you vulnerable to coronavirus

[Guidance for those at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus can be found here](#)

8.4 I need to stay at home – can I still help?

You can sign up as a telephone 'check in and chat' volunteer even if you are staying at home and you are in one of the groups listed above.

8.5 Why has NHS Volunteer Responders been set up?

It is vital that health and social care teams can easily match people who need help to self-isolate with ID-checked volunteers in a managed, England-wide system. This service aims to support people who have specific health conditions which put them at high risk from coronavirus. It will be used by doctors, nurses and others where there is no alternative local support for their patients, and will help to keep hospital beds available to those who need them most.

8.6 Is this different from helping out my neighbours and local charities?

NHS Volunteer Responders is not intended to replace any local provision. It will provide a service where informal support is not available or where health and social care professionals do not have a way to refer people into those systems. It is being delivered by Royal Voluntary Service one of the country's largest and long-standing volunteering charities.

8.7 I am clinically trained – how can I volunteer to help the NHS?

The NHS Volunteer Responders will not undertake clinical tasks. [If you are clinically trained visit](#)

Alternatively contact your local hospital trust.

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Coronavirus (COVID-19)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): what you need to do](#)

Transition period

[Transition period: check how to get ready](#)

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[Benefits](#)

[Births, deaths, marriages and care](#)

[Business and self-employed](#)

[Childcare and parenting](#)

[Citizenship and living in the UK](#)

[Crime, justice and the law](#)

[Disabled people](#)

[Driving and transport](#)

[Education and learning](#)

[Employing people](#)

[Environment and countryside](#)

[Housing and local services](#)

[Money and tax](#)

[Passports, travel and living abroad](#)

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[How government works](#)

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[Worldwide](#)

[Services](#)

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