

How to minimise the spread of COVID-19



This guidance is taken from the Government's ['OUR PLAN TO REBUILD: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy'](#) document which sets out the principles you should follow to ensure that time spent with others outside your homes is as safe as possible (unless you are clinically vulnerable or extremely vulnerable in which case you should follow separate advice on GOV.UK).

It is your responsibility to adopt these principles wherever possible. The Government is also using these principles as the basis of discussions with businesses, unions, local government and many other stakeholders to agree how they should apply in different settings to make them safer.

All of us, as customers, visitors, employees or employers, need to make changes to lower the risk of transmission of the virus. The Government has consulted with its scientific advisers to establish the principles that will determine these changes.

- **Keep your distance from people outside your household**, recognising this will not always be possible. The risk of infection increases the closer you are to another person with the virus **and** the amount of time you spend in close contact: you are very unlikely to be infected if you walk past another person in the street. Public Health England recommends trying to keep 2m away from people as a precaution. However, this is not a rule and the science is complex. The key thing is to not be too close to people for more than a short amount of time, as much as you can.
- **Keep your hands and face as clean as possible**. Wash your hands often using soap and water, and dry them thoroughly. Use sanitiser where available outside your home, especially as you enter a building and after you have had contact with surfaces. Avoid touching your face.
- **Work from home if you can**. Many people can do most or all of their work from home, with the proper equipment and adjustments. Your employer should support you to find reasonable adjustments to do this. However, not all jobs can be done from home. If your workplace is open and you cannot work from home, you can travel to work.
- **Avoid being face to face with people if they are outside your household**. You are at higher risk of being directly exposed to respiratory droplets released by someone talking or coughing when you are within 2m of someone and have face-to-face contact with them. You can lower the risk of infection if you stay side-to-side rather than facing people.
- **Reduce the number of people you spend time with in a work setting where you can**. You can lower the risks of transmission in the workplace by reducing the number of people you come into contact with regularly, which your employer can support where practical by changing shift patterns and rotas to match you with the same team each time and splitting people into smaller, contained teams.
- **Avoid crowds**. You can lower the risks of transmission by reducing the number of people you come into close contact with, so avoid peak travel times on public

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transport where possible, for example. Businesses should take reasonable steps to avoid people being gathered together, for example by allowing the use of more entrances and exits and staggering entry and exit where possible.

- **If you have to travel (to work or school, for example) think about how and when you travel.**
- To reduce demand on the public transport network, you should walk or cycle wherever possible. If you have to use public transport, you should try and avoid peak times. Employers should consider staggering working hours and expanding bicycle storage facilities, changing facilities and car parking to help.
- **Wash your clothes regularly.** There is some evidence that the virus can stay on fabrics for a few days, although usually it is shorter, so if you are working with people outside your household wash your clothes regularly. Changing clothes in workplaces should only normally be considered where there is a high risk of infection or there are highly vulnerable people, such as in a care home. If you need to change your clothes avoid crowding into a changing room.
- **Keep indoor places well ventilated.** Evidence suggests that the virus is less likely to be passed on in well-ventilated buildings and outdoors. In good weather, try to leave windows and doors open in places where people from different households come into contact – or move activity outdoors if you can. Use external extractor fans to keep spaces well ventilated and make sure that ventilation systems are set to maximise the fresh air flow rate. Heating and cooling systems can be used at their normal temperature settings.
- **If you can, wear a face covering in an enclosed space where social distancing isn't possible and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet. This is most relevant for short periods indoors in crowded areas, for example on public transport or in some shops.** The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected but have not developed symptoms. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 (cough and/or high temperature) you and your household should isolate at home: wearing a face covering does not change this. A face covering is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used as part of personal protective equipment by healthcare and other workers; these supplies should continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace, such as health and care workers and those in industrial settings like those exposed to dust hazards. Face coverings should not be used by children under the age of 2 or those who may find it difficult to manage them correctly, for example primary school age children unassisted, or those with respiratory conditions. 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 it should cover your mouth and nose. You can find guidance on how to do this on GOV.UK.
- **You should follow the advice given to you by your employer when at work.** Employers have a duty to assess and manage risks to your safety in the workplace. The Government has issued guidance to help them do this. This includes how to make adjustments to your workplace to help you maintain social distance. It also

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includes guidance on hygiene as evidence suggests that the virus can exist for up to 72 hours on surfaces. Frequent cleaning is therefore particularly important for communal surfaces like door handles or lift buttons and communal areas like bathrooms, kitchens and tea points. You can see the guidance on GOV.UK and can ask your employer if you have questions.