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UK Government Advice Regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19)

updated 25th February 2020

If you have lived with or had close contact (within 2 metres for 15 minutes or more) with a confirmed case of COVID-19, you should contact NHS 111 for further advice.

1. Preventing spread of infection

There are general principles you can follow to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- **wash your hands often - with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. This is particularly important after taking public transport**
- **avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands**
- **avoid close contact with people who are sick**
- **if you feel unwell, stay at home, do not attend work or school**
- **cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin. See [Catch it, Bin it, Kill it](#)**
- **clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home and work environment**
- **if you are worried about your symptoms, please call NHS 111. Do not go directly to your GP or other healthcare environment**
- see [further information](#) and the [Public Health England Blog](#)

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 acute respiratory disease. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

2. Actions on return from China and specified countries and areas

In addition to China, specified countries are listed in the [specified countries and areas](#).

If you have lived with or had close contact (within 2 metres for 15 minutes or more) with a confirmed case of COVID-19, you should contact NHS 111 for further advice.

For healthcare professionals who have travelled to [specified countries or areas](#), please follow the specific [guidance for health care workers](#).

2.1 If you have returned from anywhere in Category 1 specified countries and areas in the last 14 days

If you are currently well:

- **stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with flu viruses. You can find more information about how to do this**
- **call NHS 111 to inform them of your recent travel to the area**
- **your family do not need to take any precautions or make any changes to their own activities**

If you become unwell:

- **please call NHS 111 immediately in order for you to be assessed by an appropriate specialist in hospital, as quickly as possible**
- **follow the home isolation advice sheet**

2.2 If you have returned from Category 2 specified countries and areas in the last 14 days

If you are well:

- **you do not need to avoid contact with other people**
- **your family do not need to take any precautions or make any changes to their own activities**

If you become unwell:

- **stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with other flu viruses.**
- **follow this home isolation advice sheet**
- **call NHS 111 immediately in order for you to be assessed by an appropriate specialist in hospital, as quickly as possible**

3. Symptoms and what to do

You should look for any of the following symptoms in the 14 days after the day you return from specified countries and areas:

- **cough**
- **difficulty in breathing**
- **fever (a temperature of 38 degrees C or higher)**

If you have any of these symptoms, you should:

- **if it is an emergency, call 999 and tell them which country you have returned from in the last 14 days**

- **if you are unwell, but it is not an emergency, call NHS 111 and tell them which country you have returned from in the last 14 days**

Whilst you await further advice from NHS 111:

- **avoid contact with others**
- **stay at home, do not attend work or school**
- **do not travel while sick**
- **cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing. Throw tissues in the bin**
- **wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available**

4. Feeling unwell while away from home

Do not go to your GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital if you become unwell. Instead call NHS 111, or 999 if an emergency (if you are seriously ill or injured or your life is at risk), and tell them which country you have returned from in the last 14 days.

Whilst you wait for advice from NHS 111 or an ambulance to arrive, try to find somewhere safe to sit where you are away from other people, and avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you cough or sneeze and put the tissue in your bag or pocket. then throw the tissue in the bin. If you don't have any tissues available, cough and sneeze into the crook of your elbow.

4.1 On public transport

If you become ill whilst on public transport, stop your journey when you are able to do so and stay where you are and call NHS 111, or 999 if an emergency (if you are seriously ill or injured or your life is at risk), and tell them which country you have returned from in the last 14 days.

If you become unwell whilst at an airport, bus station or train station before a long journey, seek medical help as above and do not start or continue your journey.

4.2 In outdoor public spaces

If you are outside in an open space when you become unwell, stay where you are and call NHS 111, or 999 if an emergency (if you are seriously ill or injured or your life is at risk). Tell them which country you have returned from in the last 14 days.

4.3 Leisure activities

For example at shops, restaurants, gyms, cinemas, theatres, and sporting events.

Speak to a member of staff, keeping at least 2 metres distance from them to reduce the risk of spreading infection. Ask them to find a room or area where you can isolate yourself behind a shut door, such as a changing room or staff office. If it's possible to open a window, do so for ventilation.

Call NHS 111, or 999 if an emergency (if you are seriously ill or injured or your life is at risk), and tell them which country you have returned from in the last 14 days.

4.4 Places of worship

Isolate yourself behind a shut door if there is a room or area available. If it's possible to open a window, do so for ventilation. If there is nowhere you can isolate yourself, return to your place of residence by the most direct route. Call NHS 111, or 999 if an emergency (if you are seriously ill or injured or your life is at risk), and tell them which country you have returned from in the last 14 days.

4.5 Educational settings

Keep 2 metres away from others and if possible find a room or area where you can isolate yourself behind a shut door, such as a staff office or unused classroom. Make sure that children know to tell a teacher if they feel unwell. If it's possible to open a window, do so for ventilation. If you need to go to the bathroom whilst waiting for medical assistance, use a separate bathroom if available.

Call NHS 111, or 999 if an emergency (if you are seriously ill or injured or your life is at risk), and tell them which country you have returned from in the last 14 days.

People who have returned from Category 1 [specified countries and areas](#), in the last 14 days should avoid attending school, work or university. People who have returned from Category 2 [specified countries and areas](#) in the last 14 days, are advised to stay at home if they develop symptoms. All other students should continue to attend school or university.

4.6 At work (non-clinical settings)

People who have returned from Category 1 [specified countries and areas](#) should not attend work for 14 days after their arrival.

Find a room where you can isolate yourself away from others and shut the door. If it's possible to open a window, do so for ventilation. If you need to go to the bathroom whilst waiting for medical assistance, use a separate bathroom if available. See below for advice on cleaning workspaces.

Call NHS 111, or 999 if an emergency (if you are seriously ill or injured or your life is at risk), and tell them which country you have returned from in the last 14 days.

4.7 With friends and family

Find a room where you can isolate yourself away from others and shut the door. If it's possible to open a window, do so for ventilation. If you need to go to the bathroom whilst waiting for medical assistance, use a separate bathroom if available.

Call NHS 111, or 999 if an emergency (if you are seriously ill or injured or your life is at risk), and tell them which country you have returned from in the last 14 days.

It is important not to get too close to other people if you become ill - try to maintain 2 metres distance between yourself and others in order to reduce the risk of transmitting infection.

There are no restrictions for contacts of people who have recently been to Category 2 [specified countries and areas](#) and are well.

If someone is unwell in the household and has recently returned from [specified countries and areas](#), please phone NHS 111 for further advice.

4.8 Mass gatherings

If you have returned from Category 1 [specified countries and areas](#), in the last 14 days you should avoid mass gatherings. The risk to the general public attending mass gatherings is very low.

4.9 Post, packages, take-away food

The virus does not survive well for long periods outside the body and so it is highly unlikely that COVID-19 can be spread through post or packages.

It is highly unlikely that COVID-19 can be spread through food.

5. Cleaning shared spaces

If a person becomes ill in a shared space, these should be cleaned using disposable cloths and household detergents. Wash your hands after cleaning.