

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Meeting with others safely (social distancing)

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There is different guidance on social distancing in [Wales](#), [Scotland](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).

National lockdown: stay at home

You must stay at home. This is the single most important action we can all take to protect the NHS and save lives. You must not leave your home unless necessary.

[Find out what you can and cannot do.](#)

Hands. Face. Space.

Approximately 1 in 3 people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and could be spreading it without realising it.

It is critical that everybody observes the following key behaviours:

- **HANDS** - Wash your hands regularly and for 20 seconds.
- **FACE** - Wear a face covering in indoor settings where social distancing may be difficult, and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet.
- **SPACE** - Stay 2 metres apart from people you do not live with where possible, or 1 metre with extra precautions in place (such as wearing face coverings or increasing ventilation indoors).

It is important to meet people you do not live with outdoors where possible. If you meet people you do not live with indoors, such as someone working in your home, you should make sure you let as much fresh air in as you can without getting uncomfortably cold (for example by opening windows).

Social distancing

To reduce the risk of catching or spreading coronavirus, you should minimise time spent with people you do not live with, and when around other people ensure that you are two metres apart from anyone not in your household or support bubble. Social distancing is essential to stop the spread of the virus, as it is more likely to spread when people are close together. An infected person can pass on the virus through talking, breathing, coughing or sneezing even if they do not have any symptoms.

When with people you do not live with, you should also avoid: physical contact; being close and face-to-face; and shouting or singing close to them. You should also avoid crowded areas with lots of people; and touching things that other people have touched.

Where you cannot stay 2 metres apart you should stay more than 1 metre apart, and take additional steps to stay safe. For example:

- [wear a face covering](#): on public transport and in many indoor spaces, you must wear a face covering by law, unless you are exempt
- go outdoors, where it is safer and there is more space
- if indoors, make sure rooms have a flow of fresh air by keeping windows and doors open

You do not need to be socially distanced from anyone in your household, meaning the people you live with. You also do not need to be socially distanced from anyone in your support bubble, if you are in one, but maintaining social distance will help reduce transmission.

You should try to maintain social distancing if providing informal childcare within a childcare bubble. You must not meet socially with your childcare bubble and must avoid seeing members of your childcare and support bubbles at the same time.

However, when providing care to a young child, or person with a disability or health condition who is not in your household or support bubble, it may not always be possible or practicable to maintain social distancing. You should still limit close contact as much as possible when providing these types of care, and take other precautions such as washing hands and opening windows for ventilation.

Letting fresh air in (ventilation)

COVID-19 spreads from person to person through small droplets, clouds of tiny airborne particles known as aerosols and through direct contact.

In addition to social distancing and other measures, you can also reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 if you:

- avoid coming into contact with people in spaces with limited flow of fresh air such as rooms with windows that are never opened
- reduce the amount of time you spend indoors with people you do not live with
- make sure you let plenty of fresh air into your home without getting uncomfortably cold if you have people working in or visiting your house (only where permitted). You should do this during their visit and after they leave

To increase the flow of air you can:

- open windows as much as possible
- open doors
- make sure that any vents (for example at the top of a window) are open and airflow is not blocked
- leave extractor fans (for example in bathrooms) running for longer than usual with the door closed after someone has used the room

If your home has a mechanical ventilation system which circulates air through vents and ducts, ensure it is working and increase its flow rate when you have visitors (for example, if someone is viewing your house to buy) or if someone in your home is sick.

Let fresh air in while keeping warm

You can wear warm clothes or layers if you're cold.

In colder weather opening the window a small amount can still help.

If windows have openings at both high and low levels (such as sash windows) using just the top opening can help avoid cold draughts.

If you're concerned about noise, security or the costs of heating, opening windows for shorter periods of time can still help to reduce the risk of the virus spreading.

There is further advice on [what to do if you are struggling to pay your energy bills as a result of the coronavirus pandemic](#) from Ofgem.

Letting fresh air into your home does not eliminate the risk of catching or spreading coronavirus. You should continue to follow other precautions, and follow the rules on meeting with people who are not in your household.

Advice on [reducing the risk of coronavirus transmission in the home](#) from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) has been published to help you safely plan for gatherings in the home.