



UK Health
Security
Agency

People with symptoms of an illness like COVID-19



Easy read booklet

Updated May 2022

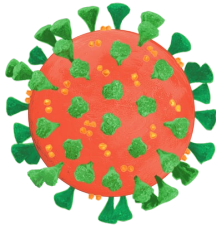
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Respiratory infections and COVID-19

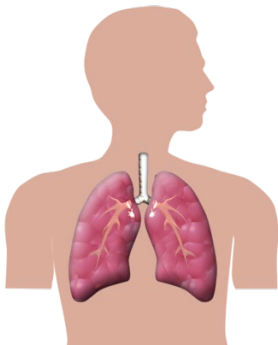


Lots of people can catch illnesses like COVID-19.



COVID-19 is a **respiratory infection**.

Respiratory infections can stop you breathing properly.



They can spread very quickly to other people.

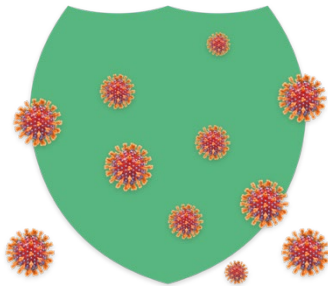
But there are things you can do to keep yourself healthy.



Vaccinations are a type of medicine that can help to stop you getting ill from COVID-19.

If you are vaccinated, you will get good protection from catching COVID-19. But you might still be able to give it to someone else.

Information about living safely



We want people to live safely with COVID-19.

If you feel unwell you might have **symptoms** of a respiratory infection like COVID-19.



For example, you might be coughing or sneezing.

If you have a medical condition, it means you are more likely to get very ill from COVID-19.

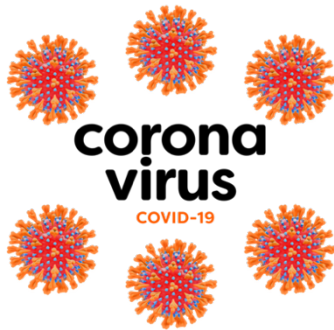


There are some useful websites for people who work health and social care:

- Read more about [people who work in adult social care who have symptoms of a respiratory infection](#)
- Read more about [people who work in healthcare who have symptoms of a respiratory infection](#)



Who can get very unwell from COVID-19



Some people are more likely to get very unwell if they get a respiratory infection.

These people might be:

- older
- pregnant
- unvaccinated
- someone who gets sick more easily from having a [weak immune system](#)
- of any age with certain long-term health conditions

You should always follow advice as you may not know if someone is at high risk of getting very unwell.

Most young people and most children are at a **low risk** of getting very ill.

But some children under 2 years old are more likely to get very unwell from certain respiratory infections.

Symptoms of respiratory infections



A **respiratory** infection is where a virus or another germ infects your breathing system, such as your lungs, nose, and mouth and, are easy to pass on.

You should know what the symptoms are as this will help you to stop passing on your infection, they are:



- not being able to stop coughing
- a high temperature, fever or chills
- losing or a change in taste or smell
- finding it hard to breathe
- feeling very tired for no reason
- muscle aches or pains for no reason
- not feeling hungry
- a headache that lasts a long time
- sore throat, stuffy or runny nose
- diarrhoea, feeling or being sick

What to do if you have symptoms



If you have symptoms and a high temperature you should:

- get plenty of rest
- drink plenty of water
- take medicine like **paracetamol** to help with your symptoms



Even if you still have a cough or feel tired, it does not mean you can still pass the infection on other people.



Read more about [symptoms of a respiratory infection.](#)



If your symptoms get worse call **111**.

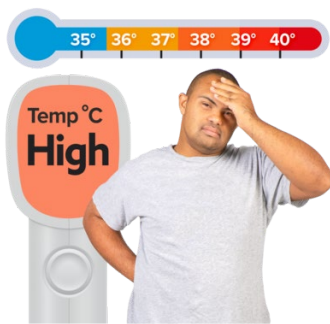
In an emergency call **999**.

What to do if you have symptoms but have not been tested for COVID-19



Try to stay at home and don't have contact with other people if you have symptoms of a respiratory infection **and** have a:

- a high temperature **or**
- you do not feel well enough to go to work and do the things you normally do
- keep away from anyone you know is at risk of getting very unwell
- keep away from people with a weak immune system even if they are vaccinated



Try to work from home if you can. If you can't work from home, talk to your employer about this.

Tell your healthcare provider about your symptoms before you go to a medical or dental appointment.



Ask your friends, family, or neighbours to go shopping for you.

What to do if you have symptoms and leave your home



If you have symptoms, a high temperature or feel unwell you should:

- keep away from anyone at risk of getting very ill
- keep away from people with a weak immune system, even if they have been vaccinated



- wear a face covering with more than one layer or a surgical face mask
- avoid crowded places like public transport or large groups of people and places that are inside with no fresh air



- exercise outside where you're not close to other people



- cover your mouth and nose if you cough or sneeze and do not touch your face
- wash your hands regularly with soap and water or use hand sanitiser

What to do if you have symptoms to keep other people safe



There are some things you can do to help stop your infection from spreading to people you live with.

Try to:

- do what you can to keep away from other people – we know this is hard if you care for someone
- wear a face covering in shared areas – especially if you live with someone who has a **weak immune system**
- open windows and keep them open for 10 minutes after you leave a room
- cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing
- wash your hands and clean surfaces like door handles that people might touch a lot
- tell people who come into your home that you have symptoms so they can protect themselves by wearing a face covering



Go to this website to find out more:

www.germdefence.org

Children and young people with symptoms



Children and young people can get respiratory infections a lot.

Symptoms can be caused by respiratory infections like:

- a cold
- COVID-19
- respiratory syncytial virus or RSV for short



Only a few children and young people get very poorly from respiratory infections.

Some children under 2 can be more unwell with RSV.

This can happen more if they were born too early or have a heart condition.



Children and young people should keep going to school or college if they can as this is good for their long-term health.

What should children and young people do to keep others safe



Children and young people may have a sore throat or runny nose. They can still go to school if they feel well.



But if they have a high temperature or feel unwell, they should stay at home and away from other people, if they can.

They can go back to school, college or childcare when they feel better and don't have a high temperature.



Ask children and young people who are coughing and sneezing to:

- cover their mouth and nose with a tissue
- wash their hands afterwards



Ask a doctor if you are worried about your child. This is very important if they are aged under 2.