

Coronavirus FAQ – September 2020

Public Health



This has been developed by London Borough of Redbridge Public Health. Please contact Ian Diley (Consultant in Public Health) if you have any further comments or queries arising from this FAQ document or wider Covid issues:

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Useful numbers:

- 1) NHS test and trace service: **119**
- 2) Redbridge Coronavirus well-being service: **020 8553 1004**
- 3) Reach Out (domestic abuse service): **0800 1456410**
- 4) Everyone Health Redbridge (Redbridge Stop Smoking service): **0333 005 0095**
- 5) The Council Well-being contact number (for extra support while isolating) is: **020 8708 5555**

Useful websites:

- 1) Redbridge Coronavirus information hub:
<https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-hub/>
- 2) Redbridge test and trace site: <https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-hub/nhs-test-and-trace/>
- 3) NHS Coronavirus site: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- 4) NHS Coronavirus testing site: <https://self-referral.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/antigen/name>
- 5) Easy read information on Coronavirus test and trace:
<https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-hub/coronavirus-accessible-information/coronavirus-information-easy-read/>
- 6) Covid overview video in multiple languages:
<https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-hub/coronavirus-accessible-information/>
- 7) Test and Trace information in easy read version and multiple languages:
<https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-hub/coronavirus-accessible-information/>

THE DISEASE

1) What are the symptoms of Coronavirus?

The most common symptoms of Coronavirus are recent onset of a new continuous cough, a high temperature (feeling hot to the touch) and loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell.

2) Can you have Coronavirus without having any symptoms?

Some people may have Coronavirus and not have any symptoms at all (being asymptomatic). It is still possible for these people to pass Coronavirus on to others.

3) Can anyone of any age get Coronavirus?

People of any age can get Coronavirus. Children seem to get Coronavirus less often than adults but they can still carry it and pass it on.

4) How easy is it to pass Coronavirus on to others?

If people with symptoms isolate immediately in their homes, then that should break the cycle of passing Coronavirus on to others. Unfortunately, there can be a delay between exposure to Coronavirus and noticing symptoms (ranging from 1-14 days), as well as some people not displaying symptoms at all. This means the virus can be passed to others unknowingly.

The virus is mainly transferred person to person through respiratory droplets from the nose or mouth, generated by coughing and sneezing. That is why it is recommended to keep your distance from people and wear a face covering even when you don't think you or people around you are ill.

People can also catch Coronavirus through contact with surfaces touched by people with the virus.

We routinely touch surfaces around us then touch our eyes, mouth or nose. This process can transfer droplets of the virus into our own body.

5) What kind of complications are there with Coronavirus?

Coronavirus was initially described as a virus that affects the lungs and therefore people's breathing. However, we now know that it affects multiple organs, including the brain, heart, liver and kidneys. Some people may develop severe illness from it such as pneumonia requiring hospital admission, and even become critically ill if their other organs become involved. Long term symptoms after initial recovery are currently being researched but some patients report remaining breathless, very weak, fatigued and anxious, for some time after their illness. If other organs become damaged this can also lead to long-term consequences.

6) What can I take to treat Coronavirus?

There is currently no specific treatment for Coronavirus but the NHS gives several tips to ease more mild symptoms. For example, if you have a high temperature, get lots of rest and drink plenty of water. If you have a cough, it's best to lie on your side or sit upright instead of lying on your back. If you're feeling breathless, it can help to keep your room cool, but do not use a fan as it may spread the virus. You can take Paracetamol or Ibuprofen to make yourself feel better. It is advisable to try Paracetamol first as people experience less side effects. You may have read in the news that Ibuprofen is not recommended to treat Coronavirus as it may make it worse. However, there has been no evidence to support this.

If at any point your symptoms worsen the NHS guidance is to get medical advice from the NHS 111 online Coronavirus service immediately.

7) What can I do to prevent catching Coronavirus?

Coronavirus is mainly thought to spread from person to person. Therefore, one of the most effective prevention measures is to limit how many people you interact with and how close you get to them.

- If you have to be near people keep 2 metres distance, avoid peak times and crowded areas, and stay outside when socialising.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to limit the transfer of Coronavirus from surfaces into your body, and frequently wash your hands properly with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

There is some evidence that the virus can stay on surfaces and fabrics for a few days. Therefore, if you are spending time with people outside your household, avoid touching surfaces and shared objects, such as eating utensils, sports equipment, or garden furniture. Change and wash your clothes and clean your hands thoroughly when you get home.

8) Do I have to isolate if I have symptoms?

Self-isolate if:

- you have any symptoms of Coronavirus (a high temperature, a new, continuous cough or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste)
- you've tested positive for Coronavirus
- you live with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive
- someone in your support bubble has symptoms or has tested positive
- you're told by NHS Test and Trace that you've been in contact with a person with Coronavirus

TEST AND TRACE (TEST)

9) How do I get a test for Coronavirus?

There are 4 options for testing for residents:

- 1) Permanent Walk-through test centre: A permanent Coronavirus testing centre for Redbridge is now open in Mildmay Road Car Park, Ilford, providing tests 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week.
- 2) Temporary Mobile Test Units: Mobile Test Unit visits Gants Hill several days per week. Slots are limited but if you are eligible, you can apply and book a slot at the nearest available unit.
- 3) Home test kits: You can also request a test kit to be posted to your home.
- 4) Drive through test centres around London (Lea Valley, Greenwich O2, and Twickenham). Access must be by private car.

Booking: You can book a test or order a home test kit by calling 119 or going to <https://self-referral.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/antigen/name>. You can also turn up at the Mildmay site without an appointment to be tested on the day.

10) When should I get a test for Coronavirus?

Anyone with the following Coronavirus symptoms can get tested:
a new continuous cough
a high temperature
a loss of or change in normal sense of smell or taste.

For the test to be effective, it must be taken within five days of your symptoms appearing.

Due to their high risk all Care Home staff and residents may request tests at any time without symptoms.

11) What happens when I get a test?

The test for Coronavirus involves taking a swab of the inside of your nose and the back of your throat using a long cotton bud.

12) How quickly will I get my results back?

Most people get their test results the day after taking the test. Some results might take longer, but you should get them in 72 hours.

You'll get a text or email when your result is ready.

If you do not get your result, call the Coronavirus testing contact centre on 119 (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or 0300 303 2713 (Scotland). The contact centre is open from 7am to 11pm.

13) What will the test tell me?

There are 3 types of result you can get:

Negative - A negative result means the test did not find Coronavirus.

This means you do not need to self-isolate if your test is negative, as long as:

- everyone you live with who has symptoms tests negative
- everyone in your support bubble who has symptoms tests negative
- you were not told to self-isolate for 14 days by NHS Test and Trace
- you feel well and do not have any Coronavirus symptoms

Positive - A positive result means you had Coronavirus when the test was done.

This means that you must self-isolate:

- If you had a test because you had symptoms, keep self-isolating for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started.
- If you had a test but have not had symptoms, self-isolate for 10 days from when you had the test.
- Anyone you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, must self-isolate for 14 days from when you start self-isolating.

Unclear, void, borderline or inconclusive - An unclear, void, borderline or inconclusive result means it's not possible to say if you had Coronavirus when the test was done. This means that you should:

- Re-test: You should Get another Coronavirus test as soon as possible if this happens.
- Self-isolate:

If you had a test because you had symptoms, you must keep self-isolating and have another test within 5 days of your symptoms starting. If you're not able to have another test in time, you must self-isolate for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started. Anyone you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, must self-isolate for 14 days.

- If you had a test but have not had any symptoms, you do not need to self-isolate while you wait to get another test. People you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, do not need to self-isolate.

14) What is the difference between an antigen test and an antibody test?

Antibody test: Antibody tests are used to detect antibodies to the Coronavirus to see if you have previously had the virus. The test works by taking a blood sample and testing for the presence of antibodies to see if you have developed an immune response to the virus.

Antigen test: The antigen PCR test tests for the presence of the virus in a patient at the time of testing. It should be carried out within **five days** of your symptoms appearing. It can be carried out using nose swabs, throat swabs or saliva.

The antigen test is currently available to everyone however the antibody test is currently only offered to NHS and social care staff, as well as some hospital patients and care home residents. Both tests are free.

15) Do I need to have a face covering when I go for a test?

You will need to wear a face covering whilst attending the test to reduce the chance of spreading Coronavirus.

16) Who will get told my test result?

Your test result will be treated confidentially within the NHS and occasionally your Local Authority. This includes the NHS Test and Trace team and your registered GP, who also has access to your result. Other than that, only you receive your test result. However, if you test positive, you are strongly encouraged to inform your household members and close contacts to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. You will be contacted by the NHS National Test and Trace team who will help you work out who you have been in contact with, so that they can be informed to isolate also. The team will contact your close contacts that you share with them without revealing your identity to them. If they cannot get hold of you, they will contact your Local Authority so that they can help and support you with isolation.

TEST AND TRACE (TRACE)

17) If I get a positive test result, what happens?

If your test is positive, you must complete the remainder of your 10-day self-isolation. Anyone in your household must also complete self-isolation for 14 days from when you started having symptoms. If they develop symptoms, they should organise a test also.

The NHS Test and Trace service will also send you a text or email alert or call you with instructions of how to share details of people with whom you have had close, recent contact and places you have visited. It is important that you respond as soon as possible so that we can give appropriate advice to those who need it. You will be told to do this online via a secure website or you will be called by one of our contract tracers.

18) What happens if I'm called and told I'm a contact of someone who has the virus?

You will be alerted by the NHS Test and Trace service if you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for Coronavirus. The alert will usually come by text, email or phone call. You should then log on to the NHS Test and Trace website, which is normally the easiest way for you and the service to communicate with each other – but, if not, a trained call handler will talk you through what you must do. Under-18s will get a phone call and a parent or guardian will be asked to give permission for the call to continue.

19) Will I need to isolate if I'm identified as a contact?

Yes, you will be told to begin self-isolation for 14 days from your last contact with the person who has tested positive. It is really important to do this even if you don't feel unwell because, if you have been infected, you could become infectious to others at any point up to 14 days.

20) Do people with whom I live need to isolate?

Your household doesn't need to self-isolate with you, if you do not have symptoms, but they must take extra care to follow the guidance on social distancing and handwashing and avoid contact with you at home.

21) Is there any support for me if I can't leave my home for 14 days?

If you are informed that you need to self-isolate, you can contact your local authority (council) Well-being helpline if you need the following during the period of self-isolation:

- practical or social support for yourself
- support for someone you care for
- financial support

This is so you can access the local support available to you, like help delivering food or medicine. You may also be able to get help from the NHS volunteer responders. Please check their website to check you are eligible:
<https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-hub/coronavirus-well-being->

24) Am I allowed to meet friends and families indoors?

Yes, providing you follow this guidance:

To avoid risks of transmission and stay as safe as possible, you should always maintain social distancing with people you do not live with – indoors and outdoors. You should only have close social contact with others in your household and support bubble. It can also help to ensure rooms are well ventilated (open windows) and chairs and sofas can be moved apart if possible.

Indoors, you should only meet people you do not live within 2 types of groups:

- single adult households – in other words adults who live alone or with dependent children only – can continue to form an exclusive ‘support bubble’ with one other household
- you can also meet in a group of 2 households (anyone in your support bubble counts as one household), in any location – public or private, indoors or outdoors. This does not need to be the same household each time.

25) What is a support bubble and how do they work?

A ‘support bubble’ is when a single adult or single adult and their children who live alone can join up with another household of any size and create a ‘support bubble’ (the 2 households should ideally be local and not involve travelling too far).

In this bubble you can behave as though you live under the same roof with the other people in your bubble, for example you can go indoors, be closer than 2 metres, stay overnight and touch the same things i.e. garden or sports equipment.

If you are clinically vulnerable you should think carefully about who to ‘support bubble’ with.

Support bubbles should be exclusive, and you cannot swap bubbles or expand them.

As always even in a support bubble you should maintain good hygiene i.e. washing hands often, sneezing into a tissue and if anyone in the support bubble shows symptoms of Coronavirus, everyone in the support bubble must isolate.

26) Am I allowed to meet friends and families outdoors?

You can meet outdoors to socialise with a limited number of friends and family (six or less). You can only meet friends and families outside in groups larger than six when everyone you’re meeting is from two or less different households or support bubbles. This guidance aims to limit the spread of Coronavirus among different households where possible.

You should also be careful to not interact socially with anyone outside of the group you are meeting, making sure to continue to follow social distancing and personal hygiene guidelines.

27) How can I stay safe if I am meeting people?

You should make sure you are only meeting members of one other household in any indoor space, and if socialising outdoors meet only in groups of six people or less. It can also help to ensure rooms are well ventilated (open windows) and chairs and sofas can be moved apart if possible. You can meet in groups larger than 6 outdoors only where everyone is from two or less different households or support bubbles.

When meeting others, avoid interacting socially with anyone outside your group and maintain social distance from all those not in your household or support bubble. The more people you have close interactions with, the greater the chance Coronavirus has to spread so it is important to limit the number of people you see, especially over short periods of time.

It is also important to continue to follow personal hygiene guidelines, including regular and sustained handwashing, using hand sanitiser while you are out, using a tissue if you sneeze and disposing of it safely and coughing into the crook of your elbow.

If either you or someone in your household shows Coronavirus symptoms that you all self-isolate, stay at home and get tested.

28) When and why do I need to wear a face covering?

You must wear a face covering on public transport, all indoor shops and most indoor public spaces (like NHS premises, libraries, entertainment attractions, places of worship and community centres). It is also recommended to wear a face covering in other indoor places where social distancing may be difficult.

There are circumstances where some people do not need to wear face coverings in these settings, including children under age 11 and those who may not be able to wear a face covering due to physical or mental impairments. Please see the [government guidance](#) for full details.

One of the ways that Coronavirus can be spread is through respiratory droplets, through coughing or sneezing for example. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Therefore, face coverings are advised to be worn to lessen its transmission. Initially, medical evidence suggested that face coverings would prevent the wearer from spreading the virus to others. More recently, there is growing evidence to suggest that

wearing a face covering may also offer the wearer *some* protection from others. In conclusion, whilst face coverings may offer limited protection to the individual wearing them, the main reason is to protect others.

29) Is it safe to meet lots of people together if we're outdoors?

You should only meet to socialise in groups of six or less outdoors to limit the spread of Coronavirus between different households. The only situation where outdoor gatherings larger than six are allowed is if everyone meeting is from two or less different households or support bubbles.

30) Am I more at risk of Coronavirus if I am from a BAME community?

There is both national and local evidence suggesting that those from BAME backgrounds are at greater risk of catching Coronavirus and developing more serious symptoms as a result. This is likely due to several factors, such as occupation and location, as well as the effect of longstanding inequalities facing BAME communities that have been exacerbated by Coronavirus.

While there are no additional measures that people from BAME backgrounds should take, over and above the existing social distancing and personal hygiene guidance, individuals may wish to take extra precautions, for example, avoiding peak travel times if using public transport if at all possible.

The London Borough of Redbridge is currently working with local BAME communities to understand the impact of Coronavirus on the borough to prepare for any future second waves, as well as developing an approach to tackling the significant inequalities that Coronavirus has highlighted.

31) What should I do if I can't keep 2m apart from other people?

In situations where you can't maintain social distancing, you should wear a face covering if possible. You should also try and follow personal hygiene guidelines as strictly as possible, including using hand sanitiser, avoiding touching your face, eyes and mouth, and washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water as soon as possible.

32) If there is a vulnerable person in my home, how can I help keep them safe?

To keep a vulnerable family member safe, you should make sure to strictly follow social distancing and personal hygiene guidelines. This includes making sure you are limiting the number of different people you are seeing from other households, only socialising indoors with one other household, and only meeting in groups of six or less outdoors (unless you're all from the same household).

You should try and avoid crowded places wherever possible. For example, not travelling at peak times if you need to use public transport and socialising outdoors where possible.

33) What could happen if we have a local lockdown?

So that more people can lead lives closer to normal, the Government is replacing national restrictions with local action to contain local outbreaks. Where increased local transmission of Coronavirus is identified, areas may be required to take additional measures to reduce the spread of the virus.

This could include closing certain local premises or restricting the movements of people and interactions with others (for example, restricting access to a particular outdoor or public space). Any local lockdown measure will be clearly communicated online by the government and the local authority.

34) Is a visor an adequate face covering to protect me from Coronavirus?

While there is growing evidence that wearing a face covering in an enclosed space helps protect individuals and those around them from Coronavirus, wearing a visor will not guarantee that you will not catch Coronavirus. Visors cover the face (and typically provides a barrier between the wearer and those within close contact from respiratory droplets caused by sneezing, coughing or speaking). Face coverings are generally to protect others, not the person wearing them. Visors are not currently recommended for the general public, unlike face masks, which are recommended in certain settings. Visors are currently only recommended to be worn in some professions, such as hairdressers and barbers, where they have to work in close contact for an extended period of time with their patients or clients.

FLU VACCINATIONS

Should I should get a flu vaccine?

Certain people are more likely to develop potentially serious complications of flu, such as bronchitis and pneumonia. These people are advised to have a flu vaccine each year.

Having a flu vaccination will lessen your chance of developing the flu which is caused by the influenza viruses. It will not lessen your chance of developing Coronavirus, which is caused by the Coronaviruses. You can catch both the flu and Coronavirus at the same time and at the moment we do not know for certain if it will worsen your overall illness. Having the flu vaccine will also help the NHS, by reducing the number of people who need to go to visit their GP or hospital.

This year the flu vaccine is being offered on the NHS to:

- adults 65 and over
- people with certain medical conditions (including children in at-risk groups from 6 months of age)
- pregnant women
- people living with someone who's at high risk from coronavirus (on the NHS shielded patient list)
- children aged 2 and 3 on 31 August 2020
- children in primary school
- children in year 7 (secondary school)
- frontline health or social care workers

For more information on these groups, please visit the NHS website page:
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/who-should-have-flu-vaccine/>

Later in the year, the flu vaccine may be given to people aged 50 to 64. More information will be available later in the autumn.

However, if you're aged 50 to 64 and in an at-risk group, you should not delay having your flu vaccine.

Is it safe to have a flu vaccine?

The flu vaccines used in the national programme have a good safety record.

Flu vaccines that are used in England have been thoroughly tested before they're made available.

Serious side effects of the injected flu vaccine are very rare.

You may have a mild high temperature and aching muscles for a couple of days after having the vaccine, and your arm may be a bit sore where you were injected.

Side effects of the nasal spray vaccine can commonly include a runny or blocked nose, a headache, tiredness and some loss of appetite.

Find out more about the side effects of the flu vaccine on the NHS website:
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-vaccine-side-effects/>

Where can I have the flu vaccine?

You can have your NHS flu vaccine at:

- your GP surgery
- a local pharmacy offering the service
- your midwifery service if they offer it for pregnant women

Some community pharmacies now offer flu vaccination to adults (but not children) at risk from flu, including pregnant women, people aged 65 and over, people with long-term health conditions and carers.

If you have your flu vaccine at a pharmacy, you do not have to inform a GP. It's up to the pharmacist to do that.

Can I have the flu vaccine if I have Coronavirus?

If you are experiencing symptoms of any illness, you should wait until they have cleared before having any vaccine, including the flu vaccine.