

Coronavirus - what it means for you

There are things you can do to help you avoid getting coronavirus, also known as COVID-19. There are also things you can do to stop the virus spreading if you think you have it.

You can [read more about the symptoms of coronavirus and how to avoid it](#) on the NHS website.

You can also [watch British Sign Language versions of government advice](#) on the SignHealth website.

Check if something is a scam

Make sure you only use trusted sources of information about coronavirus.

If you see emails about coronavirus from someone you don't know, don't click on any links or buy anything.

Don't give money or personal details to anyone you don't know or trust – for example, if someone knocks on your door and offers to help.

You can [check if something is a scam](#).

Staying home

The government has said you must stay at home. They'll review this situation in mid-April 2020. You can only go out for essential things like:

- shopping for basic things, for example food and medicine - this must be as infrequent as possible
- one type of exercise a day, for example a run, walk or bike ride - this can be alone or with members of your household
- any medical need or to provide care or help a vulnerable person
- travelling to and from work - but only if your work can 'absolutely not be done from home'

If your partner makes you feel anxious or threatened

You can still get help during this time. [Contact a domestic abuse organisation](#) to check what services are available.

You should [read the latest guidance on what you should do](#) on GOV.UK. This guidance from the government is updated every day.

If you're extremely vulnerable because of a medical condition

You're 'extremely vulnerable' if there's a high risk you'll get severely ill from coronavirus. For example, if you have severe asthma or cancer.

The NHS will contact you by Sunday 29 March with advice on how to avoid coming into contact with coronavirus. This is called 'shielding'. They'll ask you to:

- avoid face to face contact with other people
- stay at home for 12 weeks

If you think you're extremely vulnerable but the NHS hasn't contacted you, contact your GP or hospital clinician.

[Find out more about shielding and if you're classed as extremely vulnerable](#) on GOV.UK.

If you need help to get care or essential supplies like food

You should register to get help - you don't need to have been contacted by the NHS. If you're not sure if you're extremely vulnerable, register anyway.

[You can register yourself or someone else](#) on GOV.UK.

Paying your bills

You can [check what help you can get if you're struggling to pay your bills](#). This includes things like your rent, mortgage or energy bills.

Going to work

You can [check ways you and your employer can support each other](#) on the Acas website. Acas provides free information for employees and employers.

If your employer sends you home because of coronavirus

If your employer keeps paying you, they can claim up to 80% of your wages back from the government, with a maximum of £2,500 each month. This is called the 'Coronavirus Job Retention scheme'.

Your employer can choose whether to pay you the other 20% of your wages.

While you're not working you're called a 'furloughed worker'.

Taking your children to school

Schools, nurseries and sixth form colleges have closed for most children.

You can still take your children to school if you're a 'critical worker'. This means your job keeps an important service running, like the NHS, police or food deliveries. [Check if you're a critical worker](#) on GOV.UK.

You should also still take your children to school if they're considered vulnerable, for example they have:

- a social worker
- an Education, Health and Care Plan

If you're not sure, [check if your child's considered vulnerable](#) on GOV.UK.

The school will tell you if your children need to go to a different school. If the school has closed, contact your local council – [find your local council](#) on GOV.UK.

[Check the government's advice on school closures](#) on GOV.UK.

If you need to take time off to look after your children

Speak to your employer. Read more about [taking time off work to look after your children](#) on GOV.UK.

If you've got less money because of coronavirus

You might be able to claim benefits or get more money if you're already getting benefits. This includes any 'statutory sick pay' your employer might give you.

[Check what benefits you can get.](#)

You can get an 'isolation note' online to prove to your employer you need to stay off work.

You can:

- [get an isolation note on the NHS website](#)
- [get an isolation note on the NHS app](#)

If you're claiming benefits

The government has postponed all face-to-face benefits assessments or appointments at the Jobcentre Plus until at least 19 June 2020.

This means you don't have to go to:

- interviews if you're starting a claim for JSA, ESA or Universal Credit
- medical assessments for ESA, Universal Credit or PIP
- appointments with your work coach

The Jobcentre Plus might still ask to talk to you by phone.

You can still go to the Jobcentre Plus – for example if you want to hand in a form.

If you're ill or you're following guidance to self-isolate

Don't go to the Jobcentre Plus. Tell the Jobcentre Plus you're ill or self-isolating by:

- calling the office paying your benefit
- updating your online journal if you get Universal Credit

You won't have to search for work or do work-related activity.

If you can't pay your rent

The government has [announced a ban on evictions](#) - your landlord can't start court action for at least 3 months.

You should explain the situation to your landlord straight away - they might give you more time to pay.

You still need to pay your rent. If you've fallen behind with your rent you should start [dealing with rent arrears](#). You can also [check if you can get extra financial help](#).

If your landlord doesn't offer to be flexible with your rent payments, it's a good idea to pay as much as you can afford and keep a record of what you discussed.

You should also [contact your nearest Citizens Advice](#) - an adviser can help you explain things to your landlord.

If you normally have to leave the house to pay your rent

Ask your landlord if you can pay your rent in a different way, such as a card payment over the phone or online transfer. If this isn't possible, you could try to find a friend or family member you trust to go and pay the rent for you.

Make sure you get a receipt in case your landlord doesn't realise you've already paid.