



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Dear [Patient],

Important information for you about COVID-19

I wrote to you a few weeks ago to let you know about the guidance and support that was in place for people considered to be at highest risk from COVID-19 (sometimes referred to as clinically extremely vulnerable) during the four-week period of the national restrictions. That guidance, as well as the national restrictions for the general population, will be coming to an end on 2 December.

On 23 November, the Prime Minister announced that the Government will be reintroducing the system of local Tiers from 2 December. At each Tier there will be a set of rules that everyone in your area must follow. This letter is to let you know about the new guidance that will be in place for clinically extremely vulnerable people from 2 December, and which you may want to follow to help keep yourself safe.

This guidance includes additional precautions covering things like socialising, travel and going to work and school. These are not rules but advice, so you can choose whether you wish to follow them. There is a table at the bottom of this letter that summarises the precautionary actions you can take.

Unlike the guidance that has been in place since 5 November, we are no longer advising you to stay away from work or school. However, you should continue to keep the number of social interactions that you have low and try to reduce the amount of time you spend in settings where you are unable to maintain social distancing. This might include gatherings with large numbers of people, especially indoors, because it significantly increases your risk.

The full guidance can be found online at www.gov.uk/coronavirus and you can find out what Tier your local area is in here: www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions



If you are advised to shield in the future, we will write to you setting out the guidance and additional support that will be available if you need it.

Advice for clinically extremely vulnerable children and young people

As our knowledge of COVID-19 has grown, we now know that very few children are at highest risk of severe illness due to the virus. Doctors have therefore been reviewing all children and young people who were initially identified as clinically extremely vulnerable to confirm whether they are still thought to be at highest risk.

If this letter is addressed to a child or young person, and you have not yet heard from your child's hospital doctor or GP to discuss this, please contact whoever usually provides care for your child to check whether they should still be considered clinically extremely vulnerable. If you have already discussed this with your child's doctors and they have confirmed your child is still considered highest risk, your child should follow the advice as set out in this letter.

Advice for the festive period

From 23 to 27 December, the Government will be changing some restrictions on social contact. This allows you to form a 'Christmas bubble' in which you can spend time indoors and outdoors with people from up to three households, including your own. You can choose to be part of a Christmas bubble if you are clinically extremely vulnerable, but it does involve greater risks for you as you will be increasing the number of people you have contact with.

It is important that you and the other people in your Christmas bubble consider these risks carefully before agreeing to form a bubble. Forming a Christmas bubble is a personal choice and should be balanced against the increased risk of infection. More information on Christmas bubbles can be found at the end of this letter.

Access to health and care

The NHS is open, and we urge you to continue to access all the NHS services that you need, whatever Tier your local area is in. It is safer for you to use the NHS than to try to manage alone.

You can also quickly and easily access a range of NHS services from home, including ordering repeat prescriptions or having an online appointment with your healthcare professional. To find out more visit: www.nhs.uk/health-at-home or download the NHS App. You should also continue to receive support from social care if you require it.



Please make sure your GP has your most up to date contact details, including your home address and, if possible, a personal email address, so that we can contact you quickly in the event that guidance changes in the future.

Access to additional support

Please visit www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support to get more information on what government support is available to everyone during the pandemic.

Your local council may run local support networks or hubs, and there might be local charities in your area that can provide you with any extra help you need. Your local council's website will have more information about this.

NHS Volunteer Responders are also available to help with things like collecting shopping, medication or other essential supplies and with transport to medical appointments. They can also provide a regular, friendly phone call which can be provided by different volunteers each time or by someone who was previously advised to shield and will stay in contact for several weeks. More information is available at www.nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk or you can call 0808 196 3646 between 8am and 8pm.

If you are in a Tier Three: Very High alert area you can also register via www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support to request access to priority supermarket deliveries, if you do not have someone you can rely on to go shopping for you. If you already have priority deliveries with a supermarket, that will continue – you do not need to do anything further.

If you are in a Tier Three: Very High alert area and need other forms of help, you should contact your local council directly. Find out how your local council can help you at www.gov.uk/coronavirus-local-help.

It is also really important to look after your mental health. The Every Mind Matters website offers advice and practical steps that you can take to support your wellbeing and manage your mental health during this pandemic. You can visit them at www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters.

Vitamin D supplements

During the autumn and winter months everyone is advised to take a supplement of vitamin D every day to support general health and in particular for bone and muscle health. Many of us have been indoors more than usual this year and so might not have been making enough vitamin D from sunlight. You can find general advice on vitamin D here: www.nhs.uk/vitamin-d



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This advice is particularly important for people who have been shielding this year due to COVID-19, or who are living in care homes, because they are most likely to have been indoors over the spring and summer and so may not have been able to obtain enough vitamin D from sunlight.

The Government is offering a free 4-month supply of daily supplements of vitamin D for all adults who are clinically extremely vulnerable to support general health and in particular for bone and muscle health. If you would like to opt-in to receive your free supply of vitamin D, you will need register your details between 30 November 2020 and 4 January 2021 at the following link: www.nhs.uk/get-vitamin-d

You do not need to opt-in to receive the vitamin D supplements if:

- You are already taking, or are prescribed, a vitamin D supplement by your GP or healthcare professional
- You are currently living in a nursing or residential care home as we will provide these direct to the home where you live.

We expect to start distributing the vitamin D supplements from January 2021. Further guidance on how to safely take vitamin D supplements will be provided during the opt in process.

I know it has been really hard for you during the pandemic and appreciate the sacrifices that you have made. We will continue to support you in your efforts to keep yourself and others safe.

Yours sincerely,

MATT HANCOCK
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

This letter is available in different languages and formats, including easy read, on GOV.UK. For audio, braille, large print call RNIB on 0303 1239999.



Guidance for the festive period

We recognise that many people may want to be with their friends and family over the festive period, particularly after a very difficult year. As a result, the Government will be changing some restrictions on social contact, allowing you to form a 'Christmas bubble' in which you can spend time indoors and outdoors, including in your home, with people from up to three households including your own.

This will only apply for a very limited period of time, from 23 December to 27 December. More information about the rules on Christmas bubbles can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family

You can choose to be part of a Christmas bubble if you are clinically extremely vulnerable, but it does involve greater risks for you as you will be increasing the number of people you have contact with. You will continue to minimise your risk of infection if you limit social contact with people that you do not live with, even at Christmas. It is important that you and the other people in your Christmas bubble consider these risks carefully before agreeing to form a bubble. Forming a Christmas bubble is a personal choice and should be balanced against the increased risk of infection.

If you do decide to form a Christmas bubble, it is advised that you maintain social distance from those you don't normally live with at all times, avoiding physical contact. Everyone should wash their hands more often and touch points, such as door handles and surfaces, should be kept clean. It is also important to allow fresh air into the space where you spend time with those you don't normally live with. You may want to think about who you sit next to, including during meals, and also consider wearing a face covering indoors where social distancing may be difficult.

If you don't feel comfortable spending time with other people indoors, think of other ways that you can safely spend time together, for example on walks outdoors or supported by technology, and how you can make that time feel different and special. Going outdoors carefully for exercise is also encouraged. It is important that you do not feel pressured to celebrate Christmas in an environment that makes you anxious.

There may be a lot of expectation and pressure around celebrating Christmas together, but you should feel comfortable to do what is right for you over this period. To do that, it is important that the other people in your Christmas bubble understand your needs and increased risk. They can help by being extra vigilant in the days before you get together, reducing any unnecessary contact with people, especially as some people with the virus have no symptoms.



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Once the Christmas bubble period ends on 27 December, you should follow the guidance that was in place before Christmas, in line with the restrictions for your local area.

For reference only



Summary of advice for the clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) for each local Tier

You must follow the rules and restrictions that relate to the Tier your local area is in – they apply to everyone.

This table summarises the additional things you are advised to do to keep yourself safe at each local Tier.

CARE AND SUPPORT

- At all local Tiers we urge you to continue to access the care and support you need
- You should continue to access NHS services, and you should contact the NHS if you have an urgent or emergency care need
- If you are in a Tier Three: Very High alert area and need extra support at home, please contact your local council. You can find the contact details by looking on your local council’s website

SOCIALISING

TIER 1: MEDIUM	TIER 2: HIGH	TIER 3: VERY HIGH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strictly observe social distancing • Meet outside if possible • Keep the number of different people you meet low • Still go outside for exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of different people you meet • Still go outside for exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay at home as much as possible • Still go outside for exercise

TRAVEL

TIER 1: MEDIUM	TIER 2: HIGH	TIER 3: VERY HIGH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit unnecessary journeys on public transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid travel where possible except for going to work, school, or for essential shopping • If you need to travel, walking, cycling, or travelling in a private car are safer than public transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid travel where possible except for going to work, school, or for essential shopping • Stay at home as much as possible

WORK AND SCHOOL

TIER 1: MEDIUM	TIER 2: HIGH	TIER 3: VERY HIGH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work from home where possible • Attend work if you cannot work from home • You should continue to attend school or college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work from home where possible • Attend work if you cannot work from home • You should continue to attend school or college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work from home where possible • If you cannot work from home, speak to your employer about taking on an alternative role or change your working patterns temporarily. You can attend work if this is not possible • You should continue to attend school or college

GOING TO THE SHOPS AND THE PHARMACY

TIER 1: MEDIUM	TIER 2: HIGH	TIER 3: VERY HIGH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider shopping or visiting the pharmacy at quieter times of the day • Strictly observe good hand hygiene and maintain social distancing as much as possible • NHS Volunteer Responders can support you if you need help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of shopping trips you make, including to pharmacies • Consider using online delivery slots for food shopping, or ask friends and family to help deliver shopping or collect medicines for you • NHS Volunteer Responders can support you if you need help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly reduce your shopping trips, including to pharmacies • Consider using online delivery slots for food shopping, or ask friends and family to help deliver shopping or collect medicines for you • NHS Volunteer Responders or your local authority can support you if you need help

This is a summary of the guidance only. It is effective from 2 December 2020. For more information visit

www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19