

# COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

## Staff Questions and Answers – General Information updated 23rd August 2021

### 1. [What is COVID-19?](#)

COVID 19 is an illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It's caused by a type of Coronavirus.

### 2. [What are the symptoms of COVID-19?](#)

Please access the NHS Website for the latest advice using the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

Further sources of **trustworthy information** can be found at:

- The UK coronavirus (COVID-19) page <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- The NHS coronavirus (COVID19) page <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- NHS 111 online <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>
- If you are planning to travel abroad check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice page <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
- Follow Public Health England or The Department of Health and Social Care on Twitter for regular updates <https://twitter.com/DHSCgovuk>

### 3. [What can I do to protect myself and prevent the spread of disease?](#)

To help stop the spread of infection, you should follow government guidance about what you can and cannot do: [Social distancing: what you need to do - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

Please visit [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) for the latest health advice or [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) for all other information.

### 4. [How likely am I to catch COVID-19?](#)

An infected person can pass on the virus even if they do not have any symptoms, through talking, breathing, coughing or sneezing.

### 5. [Where can I find our further information on the vaccine?](#)

Please see document Covid-19 QA Staff vaccination

Extraordinary days every day

## 6. Which category am I in?

If you're not sure if you're at high risk, see [who is at high risk from COVID-19](#).

Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 has been updated and is available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

Shielding advice was paused on 1 April 2021. As restrictions have been eased following the move to Step 4 of the Government roadmap, clinically extremely vulnerable people are being advised as a minimum, to follow the same guidance as everyone else. It is important that everyone adheres to this guidance.

You may wish to know how you can continue to take precautions to keep yourself safe. There are things that you can continue to do to [lower your risk of infection and prevent the spread of COVID-19](#),

As your employer we are required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace and you should speak to your line manager or Covid-19 Officer to find out the measures taken at your respective work location.

There is different guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people living in [Scotland](#), and in [Wales](#).

## 7. I am in the clinically extremely vulnerable group but would like to return to work, what should I do?

Please contact your line manager who will undertake a risk assessment with you to determine what mitigation and support can be provided for you to return to work.

## 8. What is the latest information on what we can and can't do?

Please ensure that you are fully up to date with the restrictions for your area.

Full detail can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do> also for [Scotland](#) and <https://gov.wales/coronavirus> (Wales)

**The Caretech Group have taken extensive measures to implement the Government guidance regarding working safely;**

- clinically extremely vulnerable children should attend education settings in line with: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision>

Further information on the latest guidance for this group can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare>

## 9. [I am not in the High-Risk group but can work remotely; do I need to return to work?](#)

**The Government have confirmed it is no longer necessary to instruct people to work from home.**

With the safety of our employees in mind, we have been working hard and closely with our Health & Safety Team to ensure that our workspaces are safe.

You should discuss any individual concerns you have with your Line Manager.

## 10. [What if I am struggling with childcare?](#)

For information for Parents and Carers , information on nurseries, schools and colleges during Covid -19 please access here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

There are a number of other options available to you and you should speak to your Manager about;

**Flexible working;** You may be able to temporarily work more flexibly, at times that support your childcare responsibilities, or for fewer hours.

**Annual leave;** You may be able to take a block period of annual leave or sporadically book your annual leave to support you through this period.

**Unpaid leave;** You can request a period of unpaid leave and this should be discussed with your Manager, for an agreed amount of time. Parental leave may fall within this category.

Please see the following Government advice for information on finding childcare, financial support for childcare, and childcare for school age children:

<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs>

## 11. [If I cannot return to work due to childcare can I request to be Furloughed?](#)

The Company approach regarding the Furlough scheme remains as per the guidance set out in: Furlough QA document, please refer to this for further information.

## 12. [If I have to self-isolate, or report as sick due to Coronavirus, will this be recorded as a sickness absence and potentially affect my attendance record?](#)

As an employer we do have a duty of care to monitor absence in the workplace, however, in the current climate we have made allowances for the current situation. This includes ensuring that you are doing everything that you can to ensure that you are available to attend work which means participating in the testing initiative, to confirm any infection and ensuring that you are providing copies of fit notes. Continued shielding related absence will be monitored and discussed with you, and we will ensure you are provided with the adequate support that you need.

## 13. [What if I need medical help?](#)

If you are concerned that you have COVID-19 you should follow the latest **NHS guidance which can be found at** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

#### 14. [What should I do if I have an underlying medical condition and display symptoms of COVID-19?](#)

Please refer to point 13.

#### 15. [I'm pregnant, are there any additional precautions I should take to protect myself from COVID-19?](#)

The coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines available in the UK have been shown to be effective and to have a good safety profile. These vaccines do not contain live coronavirus and cannot infect a pregnant woman or her unborn baby in the womb.

For all women of childbearing age, those currently pregnant or breastfeeding you can access further information here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-women-of-childbearing-age-currently-pregnant-planning-a-pregnancy-or-breastfeeding>

If you're pregnant and worried about coronavirus, you can get specific advice about coronavirus and pregnancy from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists at:

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/>

There is specific guidance and advice for you if you are in your 28th week or over, or if you have an underlying condition at any stage throughout your pregnancy at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees>

You should speak to your Manager if you fall into any of these categories. In all cases you should be following national guidance.

#### 16. [Do I need a fit note to return to work if I am off sick relating to COVID-19?](#)

You can self-certify for the first seven days of absence as per normal procedure and you do not need a fit note to return to work.

#### 17. [What if I become symptomatic?](#)

You must follow Government guidelines and refrain from attending work if you are symptomatic. Please give thought to your colleagues and their families and our vulnerable service users. **Any employee who presents with symptoms of COVID-19 must not attend work**, and must call their Manager following the usual sickness absence reporting procedure, this in line with Government direction.

#### 18. [GDPR in relation to patient/client confidentiality and COVID-19](#)

The usual strict employee obligations in respect of patient/client confidentiality apply in the context of possible or confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 *This duty extends to protecting the confidentiality of employees who are being treated as possible or confirmed COVID-19 patients.*

## 19. What about visitors to our site, how can we ensure we are protected?

We regularly update our visitor guidance, please visit the Covid microsite for the latest information at <http://covid19.caretech-uk.com/>

## 20. What if we come into contact with someone who is suspected of having COVID-19?

According to the most recent government guidelines, The personal protective equipment (PPE) that should be worn when caring for possible or confirmed COVID-19 patients, is described in guidance that can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>.

Further guidance on safe working in education , childcare and children's social care settings can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

If staff develop COVID-19 symptoms they should not attend work, notify their Manager immediately, and self-isolate following the guidance for household isolation at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Follow separate [guidance if you have had contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 but do not currently live in the same household as them](#). If you have [arrived in the UK from overseas you may also need to self-isolate](#). This guidance applies in England.

## 21. Ending self-isolation and household isolation

For the latest guidance and advice on isolation times, please visit the Government website, this information is changing regularly and it is important you are accessing the most credible, and recent advice:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

## 22. What is the Company's position on Annual Leave?

We recognise your continued hard work and commitment during this pandemic and we are aware that in exceptional cases, you may have postponed holiday arrangements. It is important to continue to take annual leave at this time. We recognise the need for you to take some time away from work to help maintain your physical and mental health in these unprecedented times. **As such, please continue to take your annual leave and / or booked holiday following the usual rules for requesting holiday.** Please bear in mind that approval of your holiday requests is a decision for your line manager, depending on the local circumstances. You may have to be flexible, given the unprecedented circumstances caused by the coronavirus pandemic but we will work with you to ensure that you take and do not lose any of your accrued annual leave.

### **23. I am planning to go abroad in the near future but am not sure about the quarantine rules on my return and how I will be affected?**

Please follow the latest guidance which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

Please note that annual leave requests must fall within the current policy in place.

### **24. If I have annual leave booked, can it be cancelled?**

At this time, we will be considering all options to maintain staff levels. In the event that we need to consider a shortfall in staffing as a result of the current situation, there may be a need to cancel annual leave. Your Manager will always ensure that you receive at least the same amount of notice as you have leave booked, for example, if you have two weeks leave booked, you will receive not less than two week's notice of cancellation.

Your Manager will work through this carefully with you, and will of course consider any holidays that have already been booked and paid for.

Your Manager will also ensure that this action does not prevent you from taking your allocated statutory annual leave before the end of the year. Recognising the temporary change in law regarding carrying over annual leave, this can be discussed with your Line Manager as another alternative in the event you have been asked to cancel any annual leave as a result of the COVID pandemic.

### **25. How to look after your wellbeing**

It is vital that you stay well and there are things that you can try:

- Stay in touch with family and friends.
- Spend time doing things you enjoy, such as reading, cooking, hobbies, listening to the radio or watching TV.
- Light exercise.
- Spend time with the windows open to let in fresh air.
- Where possible spend time outdoors in the fresh air.
- Read the [advice about how to look after your mental wellbeing while staying at home from Every Mind Matters](#)
- read the [advice on wellbeing and autism, dementia, learning disabilities, older people, and mental health conditions from GOV.UK](#)