

## **STAYING SAFE AT CHRISTMAS**

A smaller Christmas is a safer Christmas, and a shorter Christmas is a safer Christmas. The safest way to spend this Christmas is with your own household, in your own home.

We know the extraordinary lengths that people have gone to this year to protect their loved ones and the NHS. We know that people want to see life return to normal. This cannot be a normal Christmas. We must continue to work together to prevent the spread of the virus, and to protect our friends, our families and our front-line workers.

The number of people with COVID-19 is rising rapidly. It is vital that everyone acts responsibly over Christmas to limit the risk of further transmission. Around 1 in 3 people who have coronavirus don't have symptoms and can be spreading it without knowing.

To protect you and your loved ones, think very carefully about the risks of forming a bubble. You should only form a bubble if you need to.

If you do decide to form a Christmas bubble, you should stop all social contact outside your immediate household for at least five days before you meet other households in your bubble.

Scientific advice is clear: the longer you meet others for, the higher the risk of you catching and spreading the virus. You should reduce the time you spend with your Christmas bubble as much as possible and keep your visits as short as you can. You should only stay overnight if absolutely essential. The five days is a maximum, not a target. You should also keep your bubble as small as possible.

It is particularly important to think about the greater risks to more vulnerable people. If you are over 70 or clinically extremely vulnerable, think carefully about joining a Christmas bubble. If you do form part of a Christmas bubble, then be especially careful to observe the guidance - meet outdoors where possible, wash your hands regularly, keep a distance from those you don't live with. If you meet indoors, ensure good ventilation by letting in fresh air. The clinically extremely vulnerable and the elderly will be prioritised for vaccination across the UK in the early part of next year. Waiting to be vaccinated with 2 doses before spending time indoors with other households would significantly reduce the level of personal risk.

If you are in an existing household or support bubble with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, think carefully. You can decide not to join a wider Christmas bubble to help reduce the risks to their health.

If you are forming a Christmas bubble you should not travel from a high prevalence area to a low prevalence area of the UK unless absolutely necessary. If you have to travel, book ahead to enable you and others to travel safely and plan your outward and return journeys carefully. If you do travel to your Christmas bubble, you should not travel within the area after you arrive.

If you form a Christmas bubble, practise safe behaviours - washing your hands, making space between members of different households wherever you can, and letting in fresh air.

## OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

Following these behaviours, even within the home, will greatly reduce the risk of transmission.

We will all need to carry on practising safe behaviours after Christmas. This means only going to the Boxing Day sales if you can do so safely: shop online where you can, avoid crowds, and if you are in a crowded area, wear a face covering and only go where it is ventilated well.

It is also really important to cut down on social contact after seeing your Christmas bubble, to reduce the risk of chains of transmission. This includes not meeting up with friends or family outside your household for New Year's Eve. The tier or level rules will be in place on New Year's Eve / Hogmanay and it is essential, as the minimum, that these are followed by everyone.

We know that people want to see life return to normal. And with vaccines now being deployed across the UK, next year we're confident it will do. But to get there safely, this cannot be a normal Christmas.