



Minister highlights key findings of NI Covid-19 modelling

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The crucial importance of social distancing in NI has been graphically brought home by local modelling data on Covid-19.

Health Minister Robin Swann has set out key findings of an expert NI modelling study, which will inform intensive hospital planning for the forthcoming surge in Covid-19 cases.

"In summary, the research indicates that our health service would have a realistic prospect of coping in this initial period if a sufficient proportion of the population adhere to the social distancing and self-isolation measures," Mr Swann said.

"However, it is important that this is considered in context, and I would emphasise that it provides no grounds whatsoever for dropping our guard. On the contrary, the projections underline that the continuation of rigorous social distancing will save many lives and protect our health service from collapse.

"Even then, a reasonable worst case scenario would involve significant loss of life in Northern Ireland.

"In addition, the absence of a vaccine means we will have to plan for a potential second wave of Covid-19 cases later in the year."

The modelling outcome sets out a reasonable worst case scenario, based on a number of assumptions including social distancing measures producing a 66% reduction in contacts outside the home and workplace. In addition, 70% of symptomatic cases would adhere to case isolation.



The modelling team's best judgement is that this would lead to a peak number of 180 Covid-19 patients requiring ventilation and critical care beds during the first wave of the epidemic. The peak number of Covid-19 hospital admissions would be 500 per week.

Under this reasonable worst case scenario, the projected number of cumulative Covid-19 deaths in Northern Ireland over 20 weeks of the epidemic would be 3,000.

The modelling indicates that the peak of the first wave of the epidemic is expected between 6-20 April 2020.

The modelling team authors emphasise that the work is not a prediction or forecast, rather a model for planning purposes; and also state: "It is assumed that current restrictions remain in place for the foreseeable future. When the current restrictions are relaxed, there will be a second wave. Future modelling will focus on the size and shape of this depending on how/when restrictions are relaxed or re-introduced. This will remain the case until there is substantial population immunity either as a result of recovery from infection or successful vaccination."

Notes to editors:

1. People with underlying health conditions whose symptoms get worse, and those who feel they cannot manage their symptoms, should contact their GP or Out of Hours provider for an initial assessment over the phone. They may be referred to one of the Covid-19 Centres. Patients will not be able to go directly to a centre without being referred by their GP or Out of Hours provider.
2. Current information and advice in relation to Covid-19 can be found on the [Public Health Agency website](https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus.) ([.](https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus.)
3. Patients who have a persistent cough, or high temperature, together with any other members of their household must self-isolate according to the guidance on the [Public Health Agency website](https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus#what-should-i-do-if-i-think-i-have-coronavirus.) ([.](https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus#what-should-i-do-if-i-think-i-have-coronavirus.)
4. The Department of Health NI has launched a new Covid-19 NI information app to provide people with immediate advice and links to vital trusted information. The app will be updated as the pandemic evolves. Download the Covid-19 NI app - search for Covid-19 NI on the Apple app store and [Covid-19 NI](http://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=net.hscni.covid19ni&gl=GB) ([on google play.](http://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=net.hscni.covid19ni&gl=GB)
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