

Figure 7 Advice to callers who were concerned they had Covid-19 from the 19 March 2020 NHS Pathways release overview

Instructions for call handler: Refer to National Covid-19 criteria for symptoms for other information.

- ☐ During the outbreak symptoms of cough or fever are likely due to coronavirus. The NHS advice is to stay at home and avoid public places. Go to the [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) for the latest information.
- ☐ Try to avoid visitors to your home. Essential supplies can be dropped off.
- ☐ Do you not use public transport or taxis.
- ☐ Rest, drink plenty of fluids and make sure someone checks on you readily. Avoid unnecessary contact.
- ☐ Cover the mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Put use tissues into a bin immediately and wash their hands.
- ☐ If you are known to have a condition where in an infection may be serious you should call your usual healthcare provider.
- ☐ Unless advised not to take, paracetamol can be used to relieve pain or fever. Follow the instructions in the pack. If in doubt call your local pharmacy.
- ☐ If the conditions get worse or you have any other concerns, you must access [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) online or call us back. Further information about coronavirus (Covid-19) an be accessed at [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk).

4.2.7 On 30 March 2020, a further pathway update was released (release 19.3.5) (NHS Digital, 2020). This update included a Covid-19 level 4 switch. This was added at the request of the NHS England central ambulance team, and enabled ambulance category 3 (urgent calls – responded to at least 9 out of 10 times before 120 minutes) and category 4 (less urgent calls – responded to at least 9 out of 10 times before 180 minutes) dispositions reached by core NHS 111 health advisors using the Covid-19 algorithm to instead be redirected to a clinician, with a ‘Speak to a clinician from our service immediately – Covid 19 Ambulance Validation (Dx3310)’ disposition. This switch was only to be used by providers when advised by NHS England.



4.2.8 The update also included the following:

- Pregnancy was built into the Covid-19 pathway, so that females aged between 11 and 55 years were asked: “Is there any chance the individual is pregnant?” and received appropriate care advice.
- A new vulnerability question was added to ensure those who had been identified as extremely vulnerable by the NHS reached an appropriate disposition of ‘Covid-19 risk clinical assessment service 2 hours.’ The question was: “Have you had a letter from the NHS advising isolation for 12 weeks?”
- A new question was added to establish if there is a continuous cough for those who are vulnerable to prevent them from reaching a self-care disposition. The question was: “Do you have a new continuous cough?”

4.2.9 If a self-care at home disposition was reached, the health advisors’ advice changed from “From what you have told me, the problem can be safely looked after at home” to “In the current situation, the NHS needs the problem to be managed at home.”

The supporting document clarifies this by stating: “This is due to more people needing to be directed to home care as the situation escalates.”

4.2.10 On 31 March 2020, NHS Pathways released a further update, highlighting a mistake in one of the algorithm pathways. In summary, the update stated:

- Those who are not breathless and identified as extremely vulnerable by the NHS will be triaged for persistent cough and fever.
- Those over 65 years of age will now receive a full breathlessness triage and will reach an appropriate disposition.

4.2.11 On 1 April 2020, NHS Pathways issued an update with new care advice regarding the risks associated with worsening (**see figure 8**). This new advice included specific ‘watch for’ symptoms for those who had been advised to self-care at home.

