



## Coronavirus

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### Analysis

# How coronavirus advice from Boris Johnson has changed

*Guardian staff*

From shaking hands to shaking a big stick - the PM's stance on the contagion has evolved rapidly

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## **28 February (after the death of a Briton aboard the Diamond Princess cruise ship)**

“The issue of coronavirus is something that is the government’s top priority. The best thing people can do to prevent the spread of coronavirus is wash your hands.”

## **3 March (release of coronavirus action plan)**

“I’m shaking hands continuously. I was at a hospital the other night where I think there were actually a few coronavirus patients and I shook hands with everybody, you’ll be pleased to know. I continue to shake hands.

“We already have a fantastic NHS, fantastic testing systems and fantastic surveillance of the spread of the disease ... I want to stress that for the vast majority of the people of this country, we should be going about our business as usual.”

### **5 March (after death of first victim on UK soil)**

“We are still in the contain phase, though now our scientists and medical advisers are making preparations for the delay phase. For the moment, things are as they have been. There’s been a change of advice on Italy, I believe, but basically we’re saying, ‘Wash your hands and business as usual.’”

### **12 March**

“This is the worst public health crisis in a generation. And it’s going to spread further and I must level with you, level with the British public: many more families are going to lose loved ones before their time.

“We have a clear plan that we are now working through. We are not, I repeat not, closing schools now. The scientific advice is this could do more harm than good at this time. Schools should only close if they are specifically advised to do so.”

### **18 March**

“I want to repeat that everyone - everyone - must follow the advice to protect themselves and their families, but also - more importantly - to protect the wider public. So stay at home for seven days if you think you have the symptoms. Remember, the two key symptoms are high temperature and a continuous new cough.

“Whole household to stay at home for 14 days if one member in that household thinks he/she has symptoms. Avoid all unnecessary gatherings - pubs, clubs, bars, restaurants, theatres and so on - and work from home if you can. Wash your hands.”

### **19 March**

“I’m conscious as the days have gone by that people will want to know how long we’re expecting them to keep it up. I think, looking at it all, that we can turn the tide within the next 12 weeks, and I’m absolutely confident that we can send coronavirus packing in this country.”

### **20 March (asked if he would be visiting his mother on Mother’s Day)**

“I’ll be working very hard on Sunday, I can tell you that. I will certainly be sending her my very best wishes and hope to get to see her.”

### **22 March article**

“This Mothering Sunday, the single best present that we can give - we who owe our mothers so much - is to spare them the risk of catching a very dangerous disease. The sad news is, that means staying away.”

## 22 March press conference (after a weekend in which people continued to go to the beach and parks)

“I want, of course I do, people to be able to go to the parks, open spaces and enjoy themselves. It is crucial for health, physical and mental wellbeing.

“Take this [government physical distancing] advice seriously, follow it, because it is absolutely crucial. And, as I have said throughout this process, we will keep the implementation of these measures under constant review and, yes of course, we will bring forward further measures if we think that is necessary.”

## 23 March

“From this evening I must give the British people a very simple instruction – you must stay at home ... If you don’t follow the rules, the police will have the powers to enforce them, including through fines and dispersing gatherings ... at present there are just no easy options. The way ahead is hard, and it is still true that many lives will sadly be lost.”

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