



- Government urges up to 1.5 million people in England who face the highest risk of being hospitalised by the virus to shield themselves and stay at home
- People with specific underlying health conditions, including some being treated for cancer, will be contacted by the NHS this week
- Plans also unveiled to deliver groceries and medicines for those most at risk from the virus where needed

Up to 1.5 million people in England identified by the NHS as being at higher risk of severe illness if they contract coronavirus should stay at home to protect themselves, the government urged today (22 March 2020).

They will receive communication shortly with detailed advice on behalf of their GP practice or specialist on how best to protect themselves.

A raft of new measures, including a helpline for the most in need of support, have been set out for those considered to be extremely vulnerable due to their medical conditions, so people know exactly how to care for themselves and others in the coming months.

It was also announced that a new Local Support System will make sure those individuals self-isolating at home and who are without a support network of friends and family will receive basic groceries. Community pharmacies will support those who need help getting their medicines delivered.

their condition while self-isolating, including getting prescriptions delivered and accessing support for daily living.

For the individuals most at risk of the illness, these actions will save lives.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

- “ We are working incredibly hard, day and night, to protect the nation’s public health whilst supporting our NHS so it can continue to look after patients in need of care.
- “ It is vital that we do everything we can to protect ourselves, our families and our friends from being impacted by the virus. But for those who are at the highest risk in our society, we have to do even more to ensure they’re kept safe.
- “ Whether it’s going shopping for a neighbour in need, or keeping inside if you know you’re at risk, we all have a part to play in protecting the welfare of those who are most vulnerable.”

Dr Paul Johnstone, Director at Public Health England, said:

- “ The NHS are contacting the people who are most vulnerable to developing a very serious illness as a result of COVID-19 with specific advice to stay at home for at least 12 weeks. ”
- “ If you receive a letter it is vitally important that you act on it for your own protection, don’t attend any gatherings of friends or families and don’t go out for shopping, leisure or travel.
- “ Those of us who are less at risk can play our part in protecting other people by following the government’s advice on social distancing and volunteering to give extra support to vulnerable people who are staying at home.”

The guidance for people at the highest risk is:

- Strictly avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough.
- Do not leave your house for at least 12 weeks starting on Monday 22 March.
- Do not attend any gatherings. This includes gatherings of friends and families in private spaces e.g. family homes, weddings, parties and religious services.
- Do not go out for shopping, leisure or travel and, when arranging food or medication deliveries, these should be left at the door to minimise contact.
- Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.
- Do use telephone or online services to contact your GP practice or other essential services as and when you need.

Further Information