

Your Questions Answered - Advice for people at high risk from coronavirus

(November 2020)

Q: Am I at increased risk?

A: Anyone can become ill from coronavirus, but some people are more at risk of serious illness. People in the highest risk group (also known as the shielding list or 'clinically extremely vulnerable') include those who are currently being treated for cancer, have had organ transplants, are taking certain immunosuppressant medicines or have a serious lung condition (e.g. cystic fibrosis or severe COPD). Adults with Down's Syndrome and people with severe kidney disease (usually on dialysis) have recently been added to this group.

You can check the higher risk lists here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>

Q: Can my GP issue a shielding letter?

A: No – GP Practices cannot access these letters. If you are in the highest risk group you should have received a letter from the NHS. Please do not ask your practice for a letter. You can obtain a list confirming your medical problems by logging in to Online Access or the NHS App.

Q: I am in the high risk group, what should I do?

A: You are advised to stay at home as much as possible until 2 December but the government are not currently advising anyone to 'shield' as they did in March. You can still go out to exercise and for essential medical appointments, but try to stay away from other people as much as possible and avoid busy areas. Try to shop online or ask family or friends to collect shopping for you.

You should work from home if you can and your employer should support you to do this. If you cannot work from home, you are advised not to attend work currently. If you are unable to work, you may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit.

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/worker-support>

Household members can continue to go to work as normal but should be encouraged to take precautions like washing hands when returning home.

Q: I am in the moderate risk group, what should I do?

A: It is important that you follow the general advice on social distancing. You should try to wear a face covering, wash your hands frequently and stay at least 2 metres away from anyone you do not live with. You can go to work (if you cannot work from home) but you may wish to discuss your risk with your employer. You will not receive a letter from the NHS.

Q: Should my child go to school?

A: We now know that the risk of children becoming seriously ill from coronavirus is very low, even if they have an underlying health condition. Most children who may have initially been advised they were at increased risk from coronavirus do not now need to stay off school. Your child's education and mental health are important and in most cases, keeping them off school may do more harm than good. If you are unsure, check with your child's specialist or call us to discuss.

Ref: www.nhs.uk 6 November 2020

You can access the full government guidance here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>