



**April 2020**

**Important Message from Portstewart Family Practice to Everyone.**

The government have issued advice for everyone in order to reduce the spread of Coronavirus ( COVID-19). The information is available online [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) however this is an attempt to summarize the guidance as there are some differences in the guidance for three different groups; Low/normal risk, vulnerable and extremely vulnerable.

**EVERYONE INCLUDING CHILDREN ARE ADVISED TO FOLLOW SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES**

The websites public health and [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) have detailed information.

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

**What is social distancing?**

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

They are to:

Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough

1. Avoid non-essential use of public transport when possible
2. Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to [employer guidance](#) for more information

3. Avoid large and small gatherings in public spaces, noting that pubs, restaurants, leisure centres and similar venues are currently shut as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather together.
4. Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media
5. Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services

**Everyone** should be trying to follow these measures **as much as is practicable**.

### **Vulnerable**

The guidance advises those who are at **increased risk of severe illness** from coronavirus (COVID-19) to be **particularly stringent in following social distancing measures**.

This means it is very important **to strictly follow social distancing** - so it isn't quite that same as everyone else that should aim to social distance as best they can.

This group includes those who are:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):
  - chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as [asthma](#), [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease \(COPD\)](#), emphysema or [bronchitis](#)
  - chronic heart disease, such as [heart failure](#)
  - [chronic kidney disease](#)
  - chronic liver disease, such as [hepatitis](#)
  - chronic neurological conditions, such as [Parkinson's disease](#), [motor neurone disease](#), [multiple sclerosis \(MS\)](#), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
  - [diabetes](#)
  - problems with your spleen - for example, [sickle cell](#) disease or if you have had your spleen removed
  - a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as [HIV and AIDS](#), or medicines such as [steroid tablets](#) or [chemotherapy](#)
  - being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)
- those who are pregnant

## **Extremely Vulnerable**

This guidance is for people, including children, who are at **very high risk** of severe illness from coronavirus ( COVID-19).

If you fall into this group you are **strongly advised to stay at home at all times**

**These patients will have been directly sent a letter from the GP/NHS providing further advice.**

## **What is Shielding?**

Shielding is a practice used to protect extremely vulnerable people from coming into contact with coronavirus.

Shielding means not leaving the house and social distancing within the house. These people should not even leave the house and social distance within the house. These people should not go out even for a walk and should only work from home.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19> People falling into this extremely vulnerable group include:

1. Solid organ transplant recipients.
2. People with specific cancers:
  - people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy
  - people with lung cancer who are undergoing radical radiotherapy
  - people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
  - people having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
  - people having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
  - people who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
3. People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD.

4. People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell).
5. People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection.
6. Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.