

Coronavirus: What are social distancing and self-isolation?

Members of the public should stay at home and not be tempted out by good weather, the government says.

In particular, Health Secretary Matt Hancock warned: "Sunbathing is against the rules that have been set out for important public health reasons."

Restrictions put in place to combat coronavirus state that everybody must **stay at home** where possible, and only leave if they have a "reasonable excuse". This includes:

- Exercise - alone, or with members of your household
- Shopping for basic necessities
- Any medical need, or providing care for a vulnerable person
- Travel to or from work, but only when you cannot work from home

What are the rules on exercise?

Warnings to stay away from beaches, national parks and other destinations were made as forecasters predicted warm weather. In some areas on Sunday temperatures exceeded 20C.

If you have to go outside you should stay more than 2m (6ft) apart from anyone other than members of your own household. This is what's known as **social distancing**.

- **Government guidance** urges people to "**stay local**", use open spaces near their home and avoid unnecessary travel
- Guidance to police says that the public shouldn't be sanctioned for "travelling a reasonable distance to exercise" - although no definition has been given
- People should only exercise once a day, although in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland there is no legal ban on exercising more than that. In Wales, which sets its own health regulations, exercising more than once a day is now illegal - and potentially a criminal offence
- You can exercise alone or with members of your own household
- Gatherings of more than two in parks and public spaces have been banned (ruling out most team sports)
- Dogs can be walked as part of a person's daily exercise



No mention is given to how long you can exercise for. But Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove has said: "I would have thought for most people a walk of up to an hour, a run of 30 minutes or a cycle ride of between that, depending on their level of fitness, is appropriate."

Police have wide-ranging powers to help fight coronavirus by enforcing social distancing measures. But there is an enormous gap between what the government would like people to do and the limits of the law restricting movements, **says BBC home affairs correspondent Dominic Casciani.**

How to stick together, by staying apart



Stay at home
no unnecessary journeys
or social contact



Only leave home for
essential shopping
or **medical needs**



Or **exercise once a day**



Or **travelling to work if**
absolutely necessary



Public gatherings of
more than two people are banned -
excluding people you live with

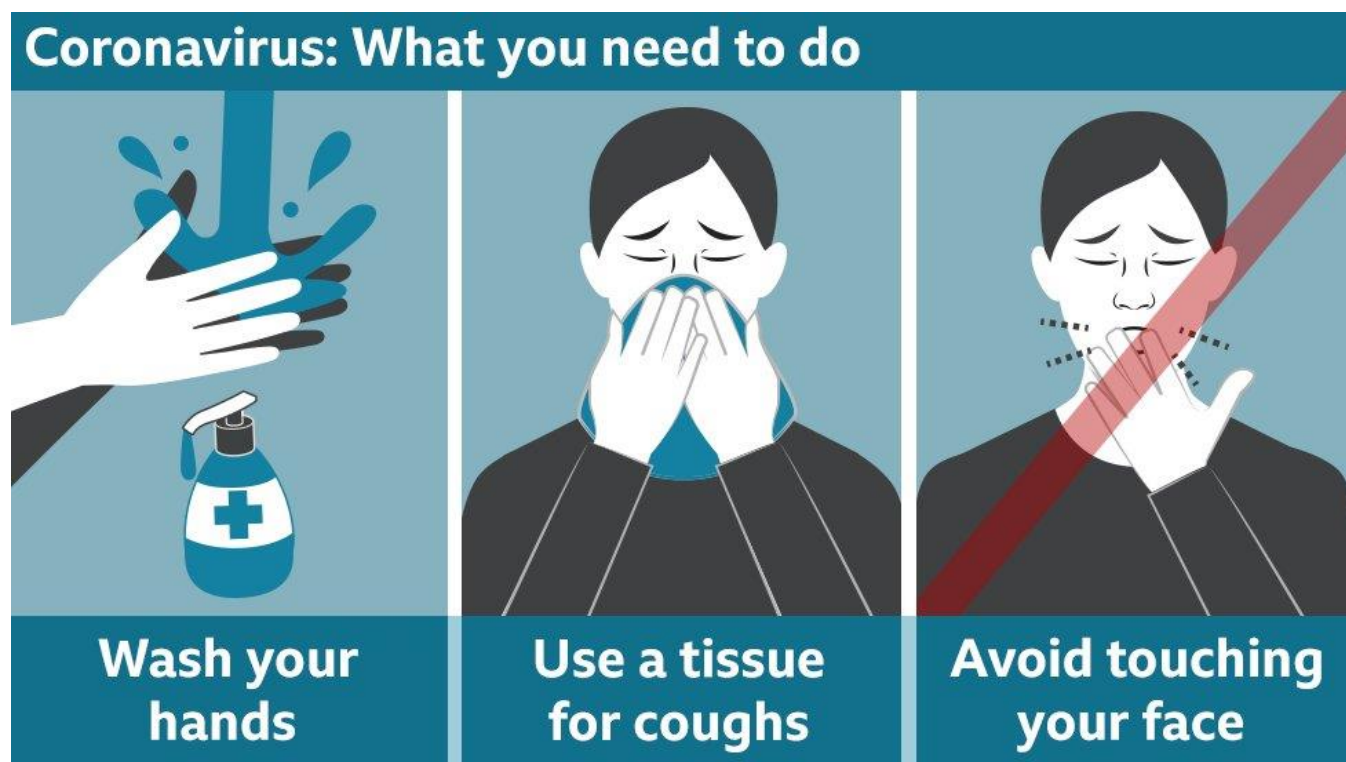


Police may be able to fine you
if you don't follow the rules

Why is social distancing necessary?

Social distancing is important because coronavirus spreads when an infected person coughs small droplets - packed with the virus - into the air.

These can be breathed in, or can cause an infection if you touch a surface they have landed on, and then touch your face with unwashed hands.



What is self-isolation?

If you show symptoms of coronavirus - such as a dry cough and high temperature - you must take extra precautions.

You should **stay at home** and if possible, not leave it for any reason, other than to exercise once a day (staying at least 2m away from others).

This is known as **self-isolation**.

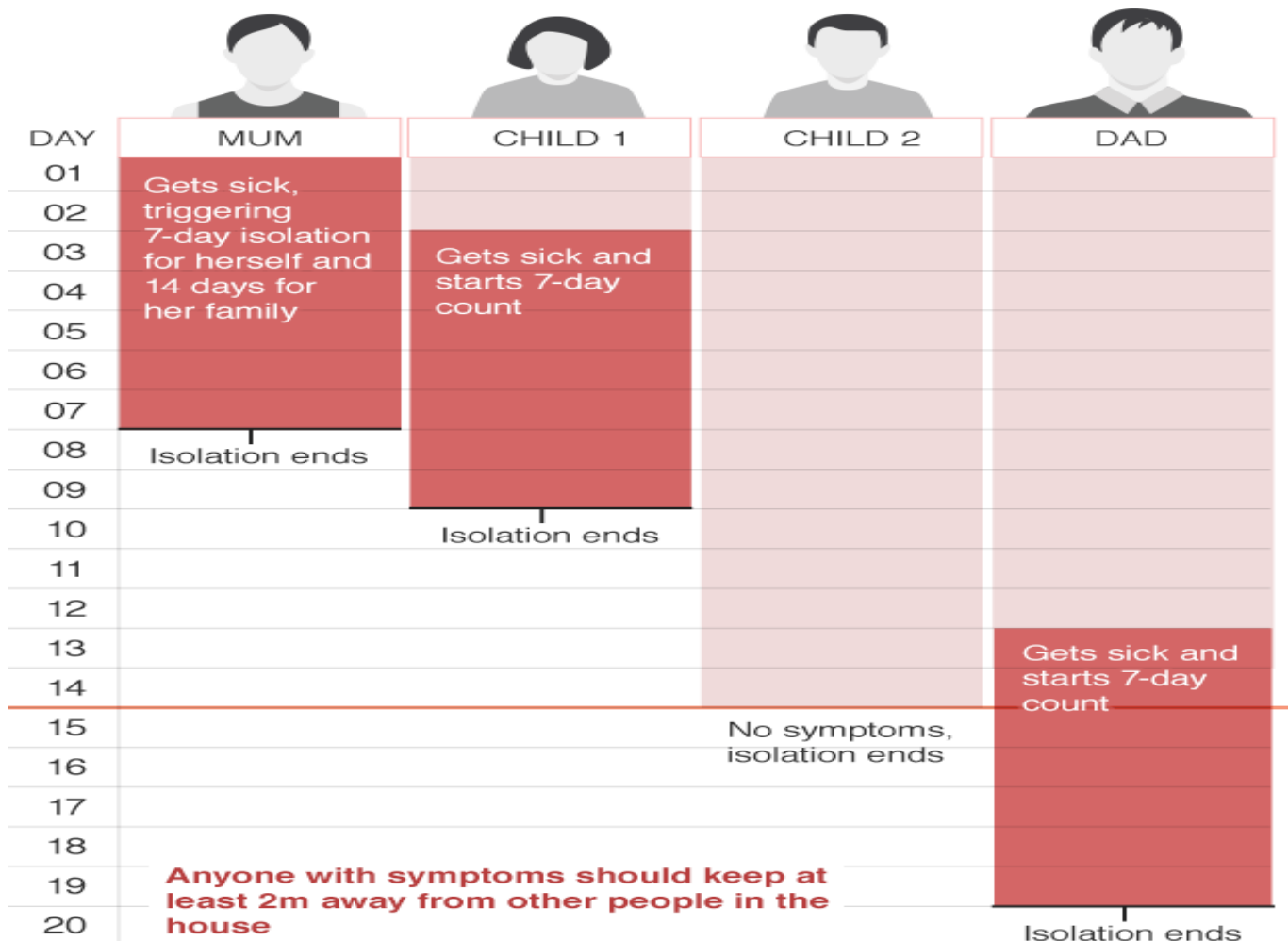
If possible, you should not go out even to buy food or other essentials. If you are unable to get supplies delivered, you should do what you can to limit social contact when you do leave the house.

Who should self-isolate?

Everyone who shows coronavirus symptoms - a fever of above 37.8C, a persistent cough or breathing problems - and everyone who lives in the same house or flat as someone with symptoms.

- If you live alone, you must stay at home for seven days from the day symptoms start
- If you, or someone you live with, develop symptoms, the entire household needs to isolate for 14 days to monitor for signs of Covid-19
- If someone else does become ill during that period, their seven-day isolation starts that day. For example, it might run from day three to day 10 - when that person's isolation would then end. It would not restart if another member of the household fell ill
- But anyone who fell ill on day 13 would have to start a separate seven-day isolation from that day (meaning they would spend a total of 20 days at home)


What happens if someone in your family gets sick?



People may be able to pass on coronavirus without showing any symptoms

Source: Public Health England advice

BBC



The person with the symptoms should stay in a well-ventilated room with a window that can be opened, and keep away from other people in the home.

People are being advised not to ring NHS 111 or their GP to report their symptoms unless they are worried.

Who shouldn't go out at all?

About 1.5 million people with very serious health conditions are being contacted by the NHS and urged not go out at all for at least 12 weeks.

This is what's known as **shielding**.

The most vulnerable group includes:

- Certain types of cancer patients
- Organ transplant patients
- People with certain genetic diseases
- People with serious respiratory conditions such as cystic fibrosis and severe chronic bronchitis
- People receiving certain drug treatments which suppress the immune system
- Pregnant women with heart disease

The government says it will work with local authorities, supermarkets and the armed forces to ensure they get supplies of essential food and medicines.

Others in the same household, and carers, can go out as long they observe proper social distancing.

