

COVID-19: FAQs for parents

This document aims to answer some of the questions that parents and young people might ask.

1. What are COVID-19 symptoms?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- A new, continuous cough
- A fever/ high temperature
- A change or loss in taste and/or smell

If anyone has these symptoms they need to follow government advice, self-isolate and get tested. In addition, all household members of the symptomatic person should stay at home until the test result is given.

Further advice can be found here:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-general-advice>

2. What to do if a child/young person has symptoms?

If your child has one or more NEW symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (continuous cough; high temperature ; loss or change in sense of taste or smell) then the whole household must go home and stay at home. Book a test for your child and also for anyone else in the house who has symptoms by clicking on the link on right hand side of the NHS Shetland website home page or via NHS Inform by following the link to request a test - make sure you check the box for Shetland when you get the option. (Google NHS Shetland or NHS Inform). No one must leave the house. You will be phoned by the Testing Co-ordinator who will arrange the test (swab). Usually a swab kit will be delivered to your house.

You must stay in self isolation until the test result is back, you will be given further instructions depending on the result. A negative or 'not detected' result usually means the household can stop self-isolating. However, your child may need to stay off school if they still have symptoms (as they would usually).

If you are worried about your child's symptoms please consult NHS Inform first, unless it is a medical emergency in which case dial 999.

3. How to arrange a test?

If you have symptoms or a member of your household is symptomatic, you can [fill in a self-referral form online](#). The easiest way is to Google NHS Shetland or NHS Inform and click on the link on right hand side of the NHS Shetland website home page or follow the link on NHS Inform to request a test - make sure you check the box for Shetland when you get the option.

Filling in the form online is the easiest and quickest way to get a test organised. Once you have filled in the form, the local testing coordinator in Shetland will get in contact with you and arrange for your test to be done. They will give you instructions about what will happen next.

4. Must parents/carers inform schools if children or young people have COVID-19 symptoms?

Parents/carers should let schools know if their children are not attending and why. It is important for schools to be able to record any COVID symptoms among the school community, as this can help detect a possible cluster of cases of COVID-19 at an early stage, and involve the Shetland Public Health team promptly if needed.

5. If a child, young person or staff member calls in sick or is sent home with COVID symptoms, must they remain off school for at least 10 days?

Anyone experiencing a new, continuous cough, a fever/high temperature, and/or a change or loss in taste and/or smell should self-isolate (with their household) and get tested.

Lots of other illnesses have some symptoms similar to COVID-19. Without a test, anyone experiencing those symptoms should self-isolate for at least 10 days (and 14 days for their household). They can only come out of isolation once the 10 days have once their symptoms improve, **they have not had a fever for 48 hours**, and they feel well enough passed, and then only if their symptoms have improved and they have been without a fever for at least 48 hours. Acting early and getting tested means that, should they **test negative**, they can come out of isolation.

If someone is experiencing other symptoms e.g. blocked/runny nose, headache, sore throat, etc., but **not** including any of the classic COVID-related symptoms, they should stay off school until their symptoms have resolved and they feel well. There is no need to self-isolate for 10 days, no need for their household to isolate, and no need to get tested for COVID-19.

If your child has longstanding symptoms (eg a cough because of asthma) please discuss with school that this is not new and therefore the child does not need to stay off, unless they are unwell with their longstanding condition as they would usually. There is **NO** need for medical certification of pre-existing conditions.

6. If a child or young person's parent/carer tests positive (or has COVID symptoms) must the child stay off school for 14 days?

Yes. This guidance has not changed, and all household members must self-isolate for 14 days if anyone in their household develops symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19. Children and young people may be less likely to display symptoms of COVID-19 themselves, but we do not know how likely they are to play a part in spreading it.

7. If someone is isolating with COVID-19, do they need to get a negative test before they can return to school?

No, the test picks up traces of virus in the nose and throat, and in some cases those traces will remain once a person has recovered and is no longer infectious. So **a repeat test, following a positive result, is not helpful** and should be avoided. The important thing is to self-isolate and get tested as soon as any classic COVID symptoms develop (cough/ fever/ change or loss in smell/taste) and, if the test is positive, stay isolated for at least 10 days (14 days for any household members) and only come out of isolation once symptoms have improved and there has been no fever for at least 48 hours.

8. If someone goes off sick due to symptoms of COVID-19, should anyone who was in contact with that person get tested?

No. It is important for the symptomatic person to get tested and verify if they do or do not have COVID-19. A lot of other infections have similar symptoms, e.g. seasonal Flu or the common cold. If the person is confirmed to have COVID-19, Test and Protect will be in touch with anyone who is a contact of that person to give advice on what to do. This will not usually involve getting tested. The test is only valid at the time it is taken, so it is not generally useful to get tested unless you have symptoms of COVID-19.

Whilst the symptomatic person is awaiting their test result, any contacts should continue to follow good hand and respiratory hygiene practices, and monitor for any symptoms. They do not need to isolate unless the test of the symptomatic person returns positive and the Test and Protect team advise them to self-isolate.

9. If someone is told to isolate as a contact of a positive case, should they get tested?

No. The test is only valid at the time it is taken, so it is not generally useful to get tested unless you have symptoms or if advised by the health protection team to get tested as part of a public health investigation into a possible outbreak. Anyone who has had contact with a positive case should monitor for any symptoms (particularly for the 14 days after contact with the positive case), and follow the advice from Test and Protect and NHS Inform about self isolation.

10. If someone is told to isolate as a contact of a positive case, do their contacts also have to isolate?

No, it is only those assessed as being contacts of a confirmed case who have to isolate for 14 days. These contacts will be alerted directly by the Test and Protect team and given this advice. Contacts of a contact (including household members of the contact) do not have to isolate, if they themselves are not contacts of the case.

Contacts of a positive case are asked to isolate as a precaution in case they go on to develop symptoms/ become positive for COVID-19. If they go on to develop symptoms **then** their whole household should isolate at that point, and the symptomatic person should get tested.

11. Do staff or pupils have to isolate or quarantine if they have recently travelled from a foreign country that is not exempted from quarantine regulations?

Yes. If they have recently travelled from abroad from a non-exempt country, staff and pupils should self-isolate at home and should not come to school for 14 days from the date they returned. It is important to note a negative test for COVID-19 does not exempt them from having to quarantine and self-isolate for 14 days. This is because the test is only valid on the day it was taken, and it can take up to 14 days after they were exposed for a person to start showing symptoms of COVID-19 and the test to return positive. Please refer to the Scottish government coronavirus website for an update list of which countries are exempt and non-exempt from quarantine regulations.

[\(https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-public-health-checks-at-borders/pages/overview/\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-public-health-checks-at-borders/pages/overview/).

12. Do staff or pupils have to isolate or quarantine if they have recently travelled to an area that is now in lockdown?

Staff and pupils (and parents/carers) should consult the NHS inform website if they have recently been in an area that is now in lockdown. Advice on quarantine is regularly updated on this website.

In addition, staff or pupils who have returned from an area within the UK that is now in lockdown should self-isolate at home and should not come to school for 14 days from the date they returned if:

- they have any symptoms of COVID-19 or
- they have they have been contacted by the Test and Protect team or
- they have been in contact with someone who has recently tested positive for COVID-19.

13. When does someone need to self-isolate and when does someone not need to self-isolate?

When you need to self-isolate:

- **If you have symptoms of COVID-19** (persistent cough, fever or loss of smell/taste): *Isolate until test result received. If positive, remain in isolation for 10 days from day of symptom onset. Only come out of isolation if recovered and not had a fever for 48 hours.*
- **If you have tested positive for COVID-19:** *Isolate for at least 10 days from day of symptom onset. Only come out of isolation if recovered and not had a fever for 48 hours.*
- **If someone in your household has symptoms of COVID-19:** *Isolate until they have received their test result. If positive, remain in isolation for 14 days from the day your household member's symptoms started. Only come out of isolation after 14 days if you remain free of any symptoms.*
- **If you have returned from a country that is not on the exempt list for quarantine regulations:** *Isolate for 14 days from the date you returned from abroad. Only come out of isolation after 14 days if you remain free of any symptoms.*
- **If you have been advised by the Test and Protect team to isolate as you are a contact:** *Isolate as per the advice given to you by the Test and Protect team.*

When do you not need to self-isolate:

- If you are a contact of someone who is symptomatic, but has not tested positive for COVID-19 yet (unless advised to self-isolate by the health protection team or Test and Protect team).
- If you are a contact of someone who is a contact of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.

14. Will all parents/carers and children/young people be notified if someone in the school/class is symptomatic or tests positive for COVID-19?

Those who have been in contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19 will be contacted by the Test and Protect team so they can isolate and protect others from further spread of the virus. If there is an outbreak at school parents/carers and children/young people will be given the necessary information as soon as appropriate steps are agreed with the school, the local authority and public health.

Confidentiality is essential: no names will be shared with parents/carers, children and young people, and staff who do not need to know. The standard Test and Protect processes will ascertain any close contacts and make any necessary phone calls, without disclosing the name of the person who has tested positive. All parties should be discouraged from speculating and encouraged to maintain an open, safe culture where there is no fear or stigma associating with developing symptoms or testing positive.

15. If there is an outbreak in a class/school will everyone be tested? Will everyone be sent home?

If schools have two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 within 14 days, or an increase in background rate of absence due to suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19, there may be an outbreak.

If an outbreak is confirmed the local health protection team will undertake a risk assessment and work with the school and local authority to plan next steps. This may involve the formation of an Incident Management Team to lead the response to the situation. Any plans for wider testing will be dependent on particular circumstances. The same applies to any closures or whether any groups will be sent home. Parents/carers and children/young people, and wider school staff, will be informed as required once decisions and next steps are agreed.

16. Will the school be closed in an outbreak?

Any decisions about closing a school will be taken in partnership between the school, the local authority and the health protection team, following a risk assessment based on the number and distribution of cases. Such decisions will not be taken lightly, and only where it is deemed necessary to keep people safe and help stop the spread of COVID-19. Information about individual cases will not be shared with parents/carers, children and young people, or wider staff groups.

17. How can you protect yourself from catching COVID-19?

There are things you can do to reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with getting ill with COVID-19:

- regularly wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your elbow (not your hands) if you cough or sneeze, and put used tissues straight in the bin and wash your hands
- avoid touching your face
- maintain physical distancing, and wear a face covering if you cannot stay at least 2 metres away from anyone who is not in your household.

It's also important to remind children and young people how they can reduce the risk of themselves or their families getting ill with COVID-19. In particular teenagers can be reminded to:

- wear a face covering when within 2 metres of anyone not in their 'bubble'/class
- regularly wash hands and remember to catch any coughs and sneezes in a tissue or their elbows
- stay off school and isolate if they have any symptoms, if they are a contact of a case (or if a household member has symptoms), and if they have travelled to any countries where there are quarantine restrictions in place
- avoid house parties and other large gatherings
- wear face coverings and maintain social distancing in shops and other public places
- avoid sharing food and drink, and other products like cigarettes
- consider how kissing and sexual activity might put themselves and any partners at risk.

18. Do children and young people in schools have to practice physical (social) distancing?

No, the scientific advice suggests that physical distancing is not required to support a safe return to school. However the scientific evidence is less clear for secondary pupils, therefore senior pupils should be encouraged to physically distance as a precaution. Distancing should be encouraged in a proportionate way, and should not disadvantage learning.

19. Will schools provide hand gel and suitable hand washing facilities for all children and young people?

- Schools are required to put in place suitable hand washing facilities and to encourage and support children, young people, staff and any others to maintain good hygiene throughout the day.
- Outdoor hand basins or hand sanitisers will be available at entry/exit points. Help will be given to children who struggle with this.
- Hand gel should be available for any children and young people who are required to use school transport. Hand gel should not be used where the hands are visibly dirty (as may often be the case with younger children), instead hand washing with soap and water is advised.
- Hand washing is advised (instead of hand gel) for children/staff with sensitive skin or allergies.

20. Will face coverings be used in schools?

Face coverings should now (unless exemptions apply) be worn:

- in secondary schools, by adults and all pupils moving around the school, such as in corridors and communal areas where physical distancing is difficult to maintain
- on dedicated school transport by all children aged five and over, bringing it into line with guidance for public transport

While staff and students can continue to wear face coverings if they wish to, face coverings will not generally be necessary in the classroom as there is greater scope for physical distancing and face coverings can have an impact on learning and teaching. However it remains the case that where adults

cannot keep 2m distance and are interacting face-to-face for a sustained period (about 15 minutes or more), face coverings should be worn.

The impact of wearing a face covering for children and young people with additional support needs should be carefully considered. The support required for **children and young people with additional support needs** will vary and should be considered in individual plans and risk assessments.

21. Someone in the class/school is symptomatic or tests positive, what next?

All schools will have a COVID-19 risk assessment in place, and will have support from the local authority and public health via the NHS Shetland Public Health Directorate. This will outline the appropriate steps and infection prevention and control measures to be taken in the event someone within the school tests positive for COVID-19. The Test and Protect process will ensure anyone who is a contact of a confirmed case will be notified and advised.

If there is an outbreak at a school, or multiple people with symptoms, the NHS Shetland Health Protection Team will risk assess the situation and if required arrange and lead an Incident Management team meeting to coordinate the response to the situation and plan appropriate actions. The school will be supported throughout this process to help ensure the infection is effectively controlled.

22. Where can I go to get further information?

You can get more information and advice from parent club
<https://www.parentclub.scot/topics/coronavirus>