

Changes to self- isolation for household contacts

Key messages:

If someone in your household has symptoms of COVID-19 or has tested positive:

- **If you are fully vaccinated or under 18 (with the exception of children aged 0 – 4)**

You are strongly advised to self-isolate and take a PCR test. If you have tested positive for COVID-19 within 90 days you are strongly advised to take a LFD test. If your test result is negative, you can stop isolating. If your test result is positive, you must self-isolate for 10 days from either:

- the day immediately following the date of the start of your symptoms
- the day immediately following the date of your positive test

If you are not fully vaccinated and 18 or older

You must self-isolate for 10 days as set out in regulation 8 of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.5) (Wales) Regulations 2020. You are advised to get a PCR test on day 2 and day 8. If you have tested positive for COVID-19 within 90 days you are advised to take a LFD test instead of the PCR test at day 2 and day 8.

It remains a legal requirement for all close contacts including household contacts who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate (if aged over 18) if asked to do so by a TTP contact tracer.

- **Children under 5**

Children aged under 5 do not have to isolate or take a PCR test (unless advised by a doctor or if parent feels it is absolutely necessary). If a child under 5 is symptomatic, other household members do not need to isolate unless the child takes a test and receives a positive result.

If a child takes a PCR test and it is positive, household members are strongly advised to self-isolate and take a PCR test. If you have tested positive for COVID-19 within 90 days you are strongly advised to take a LFD test instead. If your test result is negative, you can stop isolating.

If your PCR test result is positive, you must self-isolate for 10 days from either:

- the day immediately following the date of the start of your symptoms
- the day immediately following the date of your positive test

A household contact is defined as:

- Anyone who lives or sleeps in the same household as someone with COVID-19 symptoms or who has tested positive for COVID-19
- Anyone spending significant time in the same household, including a house of multiple occupancy (HMO) where a kitchen and/or bathroom are shared or students in university accommodation that share a kitchen
- Sexual partners
- People who have cleaned a household where a case lives without personal protective equipment

A close contact is defined as:

- Anyone who has had any of the following types of contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 with a PCR test:
 - face-to-face contact including being coughed on or having a face-to-face conversation within one meter
 - skin-to-skin physical contact for any length of time
 - been within one meter for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
 - been within two meters of someone for more than 15 minutes (either as a one-off contact, or added up together over one day)
 - travelled in the same vehicle or a plane

Frequently asked Questions

Q. When does the change come into force?

A. The Welsh Government guidance on self-isolation changed on 29 October. If someone in your household has coronavirus symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19, all individuals aged 5 and over are strongly advised to self-isolate and take a PCR test as soon as possible. If you have tested positive for COVID-19 within 90 days you are advised to take a LFD test.

If your test result is negative, you can stop isolating but should remain vigilant for new symptoms, and try to avoid contact with vulnerable family and friends in the short-term (e.g. elderly relatives or those who are higher risk of severe COVID-19 infection).

Our advice and guidance on unvaccinated adults and non-household close contacts remains unchanged.

Q. Is it advice or a legal requirement?

- A. It is not a legal requirement. Nevertheless household contacts (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17), should be strongly advised to take a PCR test as soon as possible and to self-isolate until receiving a negative result. If they have tested positive for COVID-19 within 90 days they are strongly advised to take a LFD test.

It remains a legal requirement for all close contacts including household contacts who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate if asked to do so by a TTP contact tracer

Q. When should household contacts (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17), take the PCR test – does the day 2 guidance still apply?

- A. Household contacts (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17), should be strongly advised to take a PCR test as soon as possible after their household member's positive test or onset of symptoms. If they have tested positive for COVID-19 within 90 days they are strongly advised to take a LFD test instead.

Q. Are we still advising a day 8 PCR test for household contacts?

- A. No – household contacts (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17), should be strongly advised to take a single PCR test as soon as possible after their household member's positive test or onset of symptoms. If they have tested positive for COVID-19 within 90 days they are strongly advised to take a LFD test instead. We are no longer recommending day 8 PCR tests to this group.

Un-vaccinated adults and non-household close contacts should continue to be advised to take a day 2 and day 8 PCR test unless they have recently tested positive for COVID-19 (within the last 90 days) in which case they should take lateral flow tests instead.

Q. Can I have another PCR test if I've recently had COVID-19 (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17)?

- A. If you live with someone who has COVID-19 symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19, you are now strongly advised to self-isolate until you have a negative PCR test.

But if you have recently had COVID-19 (within the last 90 days) we do not advise that you take a PCR test because there is a risk it will be positive – the test may

be able to detect residual traces of the virus leftover in your body. Instead, we strongly advise you take a lateral flow test.

If you have a **negative** lateral flow test, and you continue not to have symptoms there is no need to self-isolate but please remember to follow the [advice](#) to help keep you and your family safe.

If you have a **positive** lateral flow test result you are advised to follow the standard guidance and take a PCR test within 24 hours.

It should be noted that, if you have new symptoms of COVID-19 (high temperature, a new continuous cough and a sore throat) within the 90-day window, you should take a PCR test as these could be symptoms of a new infection.

Q. Can I have another PCR test if I've recently had COVID-19 (un-vaccinated adults)?

A. If you live with someone who has COVID-19 symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19 and you are aged 18 or over and are not fully vaccinated you must self-isolate for 10 days from the day you were last in contact with the positive person and for the next 10 days.

But if you have recently had COVID-19 (within the last 90 days) we do not advise that you take a PCR test because there is a risk it will be positive – the test may be able to detect residual traces of the virus leftover in your body. Instead, we strongly advise you take a lateral flow test.

If you have a **negative** lateral flow test, you must still complete the isolation period. This is because if you've been infected, it can take time for symptoms to develop or to become infectious to others.

If you have a **positive** lateral flow test result you are advised to follow the standard guidance and take a PCR test within 24 hours. If the PCR test is negative you must still complete the isolation period.

It should be noted that, if you have new symptoms of COVID-19 (high temperature, a new continuous cough and a sore throat) within the 90-day window, you should take a PCR test as these could be symptoms of a new infection.

Q. If a person has symptoms, the household (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17), may get tested together. Will they then need to retest if the symptomatic person receives positive result?

A. No, as long as the other members of the household (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17), who tested negative remain asymptomatic they do not need to

take a further PCR test or to self-isolate.

Q. If there are more cases within a household within the 10 days of the first case, do we have to ask for new PCR tests?

A. No.

Q. In cases involving shared parental responsibility or access arrangements, if the child tests positive do both households (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17), need to self-isolate?

A. Parents and guardians should try to avoid moving a child with COVID-19 symptoms or who has tested positive, between households as this may increase the spread of the virus.

If it is not possible to stay with one household, the child must continue to self-isolate for the full 10 day period and close contacts in both households will need to follow the self-isolation guidance for household contact (set out above) if the move is within 5 days of the onset of the child's symptoms or the positive test.

If a member of one household has COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive, the child should be considered as a household contact and follow the relevant guidance if they spent time at the household in the previous 5 days. The child's other household is not considered a household contact unless the child becomes symptomatic or tests positive. For example:

- Child spends time with Household A and child returns to Household B.
- 3 days later, a member of Household A tests positive for COVID-19.
- The child is a household contact of Household A and is advised to self-isolate and take a PCR test. The child should only leave isolation when a negative PCR test result is received.
- Members of Household B are not advised to self-isolate or take a test unless the child becomes symptomatic or tests positive.

The timeframe for what counts is a pragmatic decision when recommending the 5 day period. We know that the maximum incubation period can be around 14 days, but the average incubation period is around 5 days. There is a risk that a small proportion of individuals might go on to develop infection at the outer edges of the incubation period. When they do, and if they are symptomatic, the current guidance still applies- that they have to isolate and take a test. If they are asymptomatic, that is the proportion likely to be missed.

Q. In cases involving shared parental responsibility or access arrangements, if a member of one household (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17), tests positive do both households need to self-isolate?

A. No, unless the child tests positive and shared parental access has been within 5 days of the onset of symptoms or positive test result.

Q. Is the guidance only for household contacts (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17)? What about close contacts? (e.g. sexual partners or friends who spent overnight or considerable time within the household)

A. A household contact is defined as:

- Anyone who lives or sleeps in the same household as someone with COVID-19 symptoms or who has tested positive for COVID-19
- Anyone spending significant time in the same household, including a house of multiple occupancy (HMO) where a kitchen and/or bathroom are shared or students in university accommodation that share a kitchen
- Sexual partners
- People who have cleaned a household where a case lives without personal protective equipment

If a member of one household has COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive, the person should be considered as a household contact and follow the relevant guidance if they spent time at the household in the previous 5 days.

The timeframe for what counts is a pragmatic decision when recommending the 5 day period. We know that the maximum incubation period can be around 14 days, but the average incubation period is around 5 days. There is a risk that a small proportion of individuals might go on to develop infection at the outer edges of the incubation period. When they do, and if they are symptomatic, the current guidance still applies- that they have to isolate and take a test. If they are asymptomatic, that is the proportion likely to be missed.

Q. Where can I get the PCR required and how quickly can I get hold of one?

A. PCRs can be booked on the GOV.UK website in the usual way and are readily available.
<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

Q. What happens if someone refuses to take a PCR test?

A. Contact tracers should strongly encourage contacts to take the PCR test (or lateral flow test if they have recently had COVID-19 within the last 90 days). However, it is not a legal requirement so if someone refuses, a note on the CRM is sufficient.

It remains a legal requirement for all close contacts including household contacts who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate.

Q. Can household contacts leave isolation to get a PCR test?

A. Yes.

Q. If the household contacts refuse to take a PCR test, do they need to isolate for the full 10 days?

A. Household contacts who are aged 18 and over and are not fully vaccinated must continue to isolate for 10 days as per the legal requirement in legislation.

Fully vaccinated household contacts and those aged between 5 and 17 are strongly advised to take a PCR test and to isolate until receiving the result. If they have tested positive for COVID-19 within 90 days they are strongly advised to take a LFD test instead.

Legally, fully vaccinated household contacts and those aged between 5 and 17 are exempt from isolation if they do not wish to follow our guidance.

Q. Do we still advise secondary school pupils to take LFTs for 7 days if they are a household contact?

A. Yes – this would be in addition to being advised to take an immediate PCR test (or LFD test if they have tested positive for COVID-19 within 90 days) and to isolate until a negative result.

Q. Are we anticipating any change of guidance to special schools or Health and social care (H&SC)?

A. Not in relation to this change, but the existing guidance is being updated. H&SC and special schools guidance already advises household contacts to take a PCR and to isolate until a negative result is received.

Q. If a child under 5 is symptomatic but not tested as per recommendations what should those household contacts (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17), be advised to do?

A. Household contacts (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17), of symptomatic under 5s do not need to be advised to self-isolate or book a PCR test. This is because many young children have these symptoms, and particularly upper respiratory symptoms but the evidence indicates that most of these are caused by other winter viruses, and the small number of young children testing positive for COVID-19 are unlikely to pass it on to others.

Q. What advice should be given to H&SC workers that have symptomatic under 5s?

The current WG policy for HCW exemptions for self-isolation if they are a contact of COVID-19 can be found at this link:

[COVID-19 contacts: guidance for health and social care staff \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

The policy currently is that HCWs can return to work if they are a household contact of a case provided:

- The staff member is fully vaccinated at least 2 weeks prior to returning to work and are symptom free.
- Staff member should inform manager as soon as a household member has symptoms or tests positive or when they have been identified as a contact via TTP or the COVID app.
- The staff member has a PCR test performed and has a negative result prior to returning to work.

The issue around the under 5s is that they are not required to be tested, other than on doctor / clinician advice, therefore would not get a definitive diagnosis. We don't feel it is appropriate to require testing in the under 5s to define whether or not a parent needs to be tested (?), however requiring a test in the HCW every time the under 5 has "sniffles" could result in a lot of testing (even more than we are doing now!) and people off work awaiting the test result.

H&SC worker should be alert for any symptoms in themselves or other household members.

Q. What advice should be given to H&SC workers when household members have COVID-19 symptoms?

- A. The household member who has COVID-19 symptoms should seek a test and self-isolate until they have a result, continuing self-isolation if they are positive. The HCW can continue to work as long as asymptomatic, if the household member is a confirmed positive, the HCW worker needs to inform their manager, books a PCR test as soon as possible and receives a negative result before returning to work. They can continue to work whilst asymptomatic following a negative PCR test and following the requirements for daily LFD tests from contact.

H&SC worker should be alert for any symptoms in themselves or other household members.

Q. Can children under 5 still attend nursery/childcare setting if a household contact?

- A. Yes – there are no changes to the advice concerning children under 5 who are household contacts. Under 5s should not attend nursery/childcare setting if they are symptomatic or unwell.

Q. If household contact (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17), is a family carer, can they leave isolation to carry out duties?

A. It is strongly advised that they self-isolate. There is no legal requirement to isolate or test if they are fully vaccinated so they can leave but it would be recommended they don't undertake caring duties without a negative test to safeguard the vulnerable?

Q. How are the household contacts (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17), released from isolation?

A. Household contacts (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17), are released from isolation on receipt of a negative test result. They do not need confirmation from TTP.

Q. If household contacts (fully vaccinated adults or aged between 5 and 17), are in work when we speak to them, should we be asking them to return home to isolate and arrange to take a PCR test?

A. Yes household contacts should be strongly advised to isolate and to take a PCR test as soon as possible. If they have tested positive for COVID-19 within 90 days they are strongly advised to take a LFD test.

Q. What about self-isolation payments if they only isolate for a day or two?

A. There are no changes to self-isolation payments at this stage. Therefore being asked to isolate for a day or two will not impact on the scheme.