

## About COVID-19

The correct name for the virus is SARS-coronavirus-2 and the disease it causes is Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). SARS means Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. Throughout the document this new (novel) disease will be referred to as COVID-19. COVID-19 is a new strain of a disease and until fairly recently, unknown.

We have compiled this information on COVID-19 and [prostate cancer](#) to the best of our knowledge and understanding at the present time. As the situation is constantly changing and as more knowledge and information becomes available, we will try to keep you as up to date as possible.

The aim of this document is to provide general information and is not intended to replace medical advice. Prostate Scotland **cannot give individual advice or recommend which treatments might be suitable for an individual or recommend individual medical care or health professionals** – patients should always check with their urologist, oncologist, CNS or GP regarding treatments. As the following is general information, guidance and procedures for each health board may be slightly different. If you have been given specific advice from your urologist, oncologist, CNS or GP then you should always follow their advice.

As the situation is constantly changing, almost on a daily basis, and as more knowledge and information become available, this information and guidance may change. We will try to keep you as up to date as possible.

## Information on COVID-19

### What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 affects your lungs and airways. You may hear it referred to as 'novel' as it is a new strain of coronavirus. It can cause a cough, high fever and can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems (this is the body's protection system that identifies and destroys diseases, bacteria, viruses etc), older people and those with long term conditions such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease and chronic lung disease.

### What are the symptoms

Common symptoms include:

- High temperature or fever (temperature greater than 37.8<sup>0</sup> C). This means you feel hot to touch on your head, face, chest or back
- A new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)

- Shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure on your chest
- A loss of, or a change in your sense of smell and taste called anosmia
- Some reports have suggested that patients may also have experienced gastro-intestinal symptoms such as diarrhoea. This is still being looked into.

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after contact. Reports on this illness have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and sadly some people have died from this disease.

For further information about the virus please see NHS Scotland's NHS Inform page: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-general-advice>

A free helpline can give advice if you do not have symptoms but are looking for general advice: 0800 028 2816.

### **Protecting yourself and your family**

Key NHS Scotland and Scottish Government advice to protect oneself and one's family is to:

- **stay at home**
- only go outside for essential food or medicines, health reasons such as appointments
- exercising outside for 1 hour per day for example a run, walk or bike ride - this can be alone or with members of your household only
- travelling to and from work - but only if your work can **absolutely not be done from home**
- wash your hands with soap and water regularly and as soon as you get home or get to work
- stay 2 metres (6 feet) away from other people. There should be no more than groups of 2 people together unless they are part of the same household wash your hands with soap and water regularly and carefully for a minimum of 20 seconds
- keep surfaces, door handles, computer equipment, phones etc clean with an appropriate cleaner

Strictly following these guidelines is essential for everyone and particularly important for people with weakened immune systems, older people and those with long term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease, as COVID-19 can cause more severe symptoms for these people.

The police have new powers to enforce these rules. If you're outside without a good reason, the police can make you go home. If you refuse to go home, the police can

fine you.

## **Shielding – what is it, why is it essential, and the recent change to this guidance**

**Please note.** You can see the latest Scottish Government guidance on '[shielding](#)' You can also download the 2 page PDF route map on shielding.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020, the Scottish Government announced that [shielding](#) is to be paused from **1.8.20**. You should receive a letter or SMS text message confirming the latest changes announced and that shielding is to be paused.

Some additional changes have now been announced to the original guidance on [shielding](#)

[As from 24.7.20](#) a number of changes were announced to the guidance on [shielding](#).

This includes being able to meet with up to **8** people from **2** other households each day **indoors**, being able to meet **outdoors** with up to **15** people from **4** other households, travel in a car with someone you don't live with, use public transport, go to pubs and restaurants staying in the outdoor areas, go to shops and indoor markets, go to the barbers or hairdresser and visit indoor attractions and if you live alone you can form an extended household with one other household. You should wear a face covering if you can't physically distance and face coverings are compulsory on public transport and in shops.

Continue to wash your hands with soap and water regularly especially when you get home if you've been out and about,

You can see more details in our 'Info Guidance' page on shielding [here](#).

You can also watch a video about shielding [here](#).

Further guidance about going out and about has been produced by the government:

1. A guide to help you understand what activities are safer than others can be found [here](#)
2. A tool to help you protect yourself during daily activities can be found [here](#)

A [workplace risk assessment tool](#) to help people consider their individual risk when returning to work is also available.

If you have not already registered with the SMS text service, then it may be worth considering doing so. A COVID-19 forecasting service for shielding is being developed and people who have been [shielding](#) will be informed through the SMS text service about the risk of being exposed to COVID-19 in their local area.

In the future, the Government is looking at other ways that shielding might change. As the situation changes and as more knowledge and information become available,

guidance on shielding will change. We will try to keep you as up to date as possible with these changes.

For those people who are at very high risk of severe illness additional protection measures are advised which involves minimising all interaction between them and others (called shielding).

Those who are extremely vulnerable should:

- not leave their homes (please see guidance above as this has been updated)
- minimise all non-essential contact with other members of their household

People who fall into this category will be contacted by the NHS by letter or email. Some people may find that they receive more than one letter if they have more than one of the following conditions and includes those:

- with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
- who are having immunotherapy or continuous antibody treatments for cancer
- who are having other targeted cancer treatments which affect the immune system such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma who are at any stage of treatment
- people who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- who have had an organ transplant and remain on ongoing immunosuppression medication
- those with severe chest conditions such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma (requiring hospital admissions or courses of steroid tablets)

For further information about shielding please see

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

If you discover that you are not on the "very vulnerable" list and don't receive a letter, but think you should be, you should contact your GP, or you can register via the NHS111 website to receive a letter. Having this letter might be helpful in terms of getting priority for home deliveries etc.

You will also find excellent information about these letters (as well as other extremely useful information) on the MacMillan website.

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/coronavirus/cancer-and-coronavirus>

### **Are there treatments available for COVID-19?**

As this is such a new virus, there isn't a treatment specifically for COVID-19 and no cure for the infection as yet. People throughout the world are currently working on treatments and vaccines. Antibiotics cannot be used as they don't work against a virus.

At the moment, treatment focuses on managing and helping with the symptoms associated with the virus leaving your body to fight the infection on its own while the virus runs its course.

Because 'treatment' at the moment focuses on using our own immune system to fight the infection, it is vital for those mentioned in the shielding list to avoid catching COVID-19 as their immune system (for any number of reasons) may not be able to cope.

### **If you have symptoms what should you do?**

The advice from NHS Scotland advice is that:

If you developed a new continuous cough and/or a fever/high temperature in the last 7 days, to stay at home for 7 days from the start of your symptoms even if you think your symptoms are mild. This differs if you live in a household of more than one person. In this case the family will have to stay at home for longer in case anyone else in the family develops symptoms.

### **Do not go to your GP, pharmacy or hospital.**

You should however phone 111 if:

- Your symptoms worsen during home isolation, especially if you're in a high or extremely high-risk group
- Breathlessness develops or worsens, particularly if you're in a high or extremely high-risk group
- Your symptoms haven't improved in 7 days
- If you have a medical emergency, phone 999 and tell them you have COVID-19 symptoms

There is a COVID-19 symptom check that you can do on <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/>

### **PPE (personal protective equipment)**

There is a lot of information in the media about PPE (personal protective equipment) which is essential for frontline NHS staff (even although it can look a bit scary).

Some people have decided to wear face masks for protection against the virus but as yet there is no conclusive evidence to say that these will have a protective effect for the general public.

There have been some reports recently indicating that although the wearer is not protected by wearing a mask while among others, masks may prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### **Risks for people with cancer**

Some treatments for cancer can affect how well the immune system works. In particular, this may be the case for those men having [chemotherapy](#) treatments for their [prostate cancer](#). Their immune system may be affected and not work so well during their treatment and for a number of weeks or months afterwards. Those having treatment(s) over a number of months may be at a greater risk of developing

more severe complications if they contract COVID-19 (or indeed colds, flu or tummy bugs) during their treatment.

However, some men with [prostate cancer](#), due to age ie those over 70 and those with additional conditions such as diabetes, heart disease maybe more at risk of severe symptoms if they catch COVID-19.

Another very helpful source of information is this leaflet produced by the Scottish Government: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-tailored-advice-for-those-who-live-with-specific-medical-conditions/documents/cancer/cancer/govscot%3Adocument/Cancer%2BPatient%2BInfo%2Bguidance%2B-%2B090420.pdf>

### **New national service**

A new national helpline has been set up (as from 15.4.20) to provide vital help to those people who don't have a network of support (such friends, family, neighbours) but who are at **high risk** of contracting COVID-19.

The helpline number is 0800 111 4000. The helpline is currently available from 9.00am to 5pm but there are plans to increase the number of hours the helpline will be available each day.

The service will offer help to those who do not have family/friends/other support, those who cannot get online, those who are over 70, those who are disabled, those who require the support of mental health services, or receive a 'flu jab for health reasons. This service is in addition to the support already available for people who have received letters advising them to shield themselves.

People who call this helpline (0800 111 4000) will be put through to their local authority who will help them get the service they need, such as:

- essential food and medication
- links to local social work services for vulnerable children or adults
- emotional support
- contact with local volunteer groups.

### **Who should I contact if I become unwell or develop side-effects while on treatment for cancer?**

If you have chest pain, significant bleeding or you need immediate medical attention call 999.

If you have a temperature or shivering or flu-like symptoms while you are on treatment for cancer, or for any side-effects of drug treatment, call your local cancer treatment helpline, or the National Cancer Treatment Helpline on 0800 917 7711. They will ask a series of questions and will give advice or arrange for you to have a medical review at your nearest hospital.

### **Thank you to our NHS**

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank **all** NHS staff throughout Scotland who are doing a wonderful job in extremely challenging, difficult and unprecedented circumstances who have been working tirelessly to support all patients.

Although the weekly Thursday night 'Clap for our Carers' has come to an end, join the nation on Thursday 25th March 2021 at 8pm to celebrate our carers in the '[Clap for our Carers Day](#)' – a date to put in your diary now.

### **This information**

The information contained in this leaflet has been developed by Prostate Scotland and reviewed by members of our advisory group, [PAGES](#).

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