

Getting NHS help when you need it during the coronavirus outbreak

COVID-19/coronavirus

COVID-19 is a new illness. Lots of people call it coronavirus.

It can affect your lungs and your breathing which can give you a cough and/or a high temperature.

It can also cause a loss of or change in your normal sense of smell or taste.

It is important that you stay at home right now, but if you have a medical condition or injury which needs treatment, the NHS is still here to look after you.

This summary is to help you understand how you can get NHS help when you need it.

Personal protective equipment

If you do need to see an NHS worker, they might look different.

They might be wearing personal protective equipment, or PPE.

This is when health workers wear extra protection including a face mask, a face shield, gloves and a gown.

They wear this so they can work safely and help stop coronavirus spreading to other people.

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Going to accident and emergency (A&E)

If you are ill or have hurt yourself, you might need to go to hospital.

If you need to go to hospital you should take your hospital passport (if you have one) and your coronavirus grab and go guide (if you have one). This is a new kind of hospital passport that has been made to use during coronavirus.

If it is an emergency, you need to call 999 and you might go to hospital in an ambulance. Or you can go to hospital in a car or taxi.

When you arrive at the hospital you will go to the accident and emergency department. This usually gets called 'A&E'.

The people at the hospital will do some tests. This will help them give you the right medicines or treatment if you need it.

If you are hurting or scared, tell the doctor or nurse, who will try to help you.

After your tests are done, you will be sent home if you are well enough.

Or, if you are not well enough to go home, you will be moved to a bed on a ward so that you can have treatment.

Hospital appointments

Some hospital appointments are now being done on the telephone or using a video call, you will be contacted and told what you need to do.

If someone tells you that you need to go to hospital, it's important that you still go.

If you have any appointments already booked, you should still go to them unless you're told not to.

If any of your hospital appointments have been cancelled, you will be contacted and told what you need to do next.

Getting help from a GP

If you think you or someone you look after needs medical help from a GP for something other than coronavirus, don't wait to contact them.

The best way to do this is online, using an app on your phone or telephoning them.

Don't go to a GP surgery unless you've been told to by the GP staff.

Someone will talk to you about your condition and will try to give you the advice and care you need over the phone.

If staff at the GP surgery say you need to go to the GP surgery, they will tell you what you need to do to stay safe.

Getting your medication

If you or someone you look after usually take medication, keep taking it.

If you have a repeat prescription you can order it using your GP's or pharmacy's online service.

Do not go to your GP practice or pharmacy to order prescriptions, and only phone them if you cannot order online or with the app. If you need to go into a pharmacy, make sure you follow social distancing rules.

Some pharmacies might be opening at different times than you are used to during the coronavirus.

Check your local [pharmacy website](#) for opening times.

Getting help from a dentist

Because of coronavirus, dentists have stopped doing normal dental treatment.

If you need urgent help from a dentist, you should:

- Call your normal dentist and ask them what you should do.
- Call NHS 111 if you can't contact your dentist, or if you don't have one.

If you need to see a dentist, you will be told what you have to do to stay safe.

Getting help with eyecare

Because of coronavirus, opticians have stopped routine eye care services.

If you have an eye care problem, you should:

- Telephone your normal optician and ask them what you should do. If you don't have a regular optician, you can find a list of all of them [here](#).
- Call NHS 111 who will help you find the right help.

If you need to see an optician, they will tell how to do that in a safe way.

Don't go to A&E, your GP practice, or a pharmacy with an eye care problem.

Looking after your feelings

Coronavirus can sometimes make you feel worried and anxious. It is important that you look after your feelings – this is sometimes called your mental health.

The NHS is here to support your mental health and you can call our helplines at any time of day or night if you need urgent support.

To find your local helpline and speak to someone, visit: www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/dealing-with-a-mental-health-crisis-or-emergency

This guidance is about [looking after your feelings and body](#).

Specialist learning disability, autism and mental health services

If you get specialist hospital or community learning disability, autism or mental health services, you will still get that support.

The staff who support you might use the phone or the internet to support you if they can't visit you right now.

If you need to stay in hospital, they will send you home when you are well enough to leave.

Care education and treatment reviews (C(E)TRs)

During coronavirus we are changing the way [C\(E\)TRs](#) are done until it is safe to do them in the usual way again.

If you think you need a C(E)TR you should talk to the health or social care professional in charge of your care.

Looking after children during coronavirus

If your child has a medical condition or injury it is important that they get the right treatment when they need it.

Remember that NHS 111, GPs and hospitals are still providing the same safe care that they have always done.

If your child needs urgent help, go to your nearest A&E department or call 999.

If you need to talk to a doctor or nurse today, you can ring your normal GP surgery or call NHS 111.

Getting reasonable adjustments from health services

The NHS has to make it as easy for disabled people to use health services as it is for people who are not disabled. This is called making reasonable adjustments.

All the NHS health services you use should make reasonable adjustments if you have a learning disability, if you are autistic, or both.

This includes cancer, diabetes, mental health, maternity and heart services.

Reasonable adjustments could be things like:

- providing easy read appointment letters
- giving you a priority appointment if you find it difficult waiting in your GP surgery or hospital
- longer appointments, if you need more time with a doctor or nurse to make sure you understand the information they give you
- making changes to support you if you have sensory needs
- letting you bring someone who supports you to an appointment, or letting someone stay with you in the hospital – even if this isn't usually allowed at the moment.

You are allowed to ask for reasonable adjustments to help you be able to use the health services you need.

British sign language health access

We all need to be able to talk to our doctors and nurses, and they need to be able to talk to us. This includes if you are deaf.

You might need a BSL interpreter now because you can't ask family and friends to support you, or you can't lip-read because someone is wearing a mask.

Two organisations called SignHealth and InterpreterNow have joined together to make a service called BSLHealthAccess.

This lets you get BSL interpreters for free when you are communicating with health staff at any time of day, every day of the week.

You can do this using the InterpreterNow app on your phone or tablet.

This is a [step-by-step video](#) that shows you how to sign up and download the InterpreterNow app.

To find out more about BSLHealthAccess you can visit their [website](#).