

w/c 8th February 2021

Produced by Health Evidence Matters

Public Health England

How to stop the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19)

Webpage has been published to assist the public in understanding the reasoning behind the advice for reducing transmission (i.e. social distancing, good hygiene, wearing face coverings, self-isolation and vaccination).

[Details](#)

Covid-19: rapid point of care or near-person testing for service providers

This guidance, aimed at service providers, describes the main types of coronavirus (Covid-19) tests currently available for use in point of care or near-person settings.

[Details](#)

COVID-19 vaccination programme: Information for healthcare practitioners - update

Guidance updated to include a section on surveillance of Covid-19 cases in vaccinated individuals and to incorporate updated advice on the timing of vaccination for those about to receive immunosuppressive therapy and on allergies, as per updated Green Book advice

[Details](#)

National flu and COVID-19 surveillance report: 4 February 2021 (week 5)

Surveillance indicators suggest COVID-19 activity decreased in week 4 (25-31 January), with rates decreasing across all regions and age groups. The hospital admission rate was 25.26 per 100,000 in week 4, compared to 33.66 per 100,000 in the previous week.

[Details](#)

Public Health Matters: Tackling London's ongoing COVID-19 health inequalities

Ethnicity continues to be a major factor in the health outcomes of communities during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Find out about the work being undertaken in the capital to tackle the issues faced by Londoners from the worst affected communities and areas.

[Details](#)

Public Health Matters: What do we know about the new COVID-19 variants?

All viruses naturally mutate over time, and SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 disease, is no exception. We've seen variants emerge in South East England, and variants first seen in South Africa, Brazil and Japan. Find out what we know so far about the new COVID-19 variants.

[Details](#)

Public Health Matters: COVID-19 vaccines: What you need to know

This blog answers some of the most common questions about the vaccines.

[Details](#)

Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)

The government response to the Health and Social Care Committee report on adult social care: funding and workforce

This Command Paper sets out the government's response to the Health and Social Care Committee's report Social care: funding and workforce, which was originally published in October 2020. The government welcomes the recommendations made in this report and is considering them as part of ongoing policy development.

[Details](#)

Surge testing to be deployed to monitor and suppress spread of COVID-19 variant

Additional surge testing and sequencing is being deployed in a number of locations in England where the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa has been found. Positive cases will be sequenced for genomic data to help understand COVID-19 variants.

[Details](#)

World-first COVID-19 alternating dose vaccine study launches in UK

Backed by £7m of government funding, patients taking part in a new 13-month study launching today will soon receive different COVID-19 vaccines for their first or second dose.

[Details](#)

Government confirms mandatory hotel quarantine to be introduced from 15 February

From 15 February anyone travelling to the UK from a country on the UK's travel ban list will be required to quarantine in a government-approved facility for 10 days.

[Details](#)

New vaccines partnership to rapidly respond to new virus variants

UK Government and CureVac enter new partnership to tackle new future variants of Covid-19

[Details](#)

Coronavirus cases by local authority: epidemiological data, 4 February 2021

Weekly watchlist giving epidemiological coronavirus (COVID-19) data for each lower-tier local authority (LTLA) in England.

[Details](#)

More than 10 million people receive first dose of COVID-19 vaccine in UK

Significant milestone reached as almost 1 in 5 adults in the UK get the vaccine.

[Details](#)

Vaccine rollout and variant mitigation

Vaccine Deployment Minister Nadhim Zahawi explains why the current vaccine rollout is vitally important for protecting the healthcare system.

[Details](#)

Government boost to rapid workplace testing

New government drive to increase workplace testing in sectors open during lockdown, to detect coronavirus (COVID-19) in people who are not showing symptoms

[Details](#)

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Government Office for Science

Latest R number and growth rate

Last updated on 5th February 2021.

Latest R number range for the UK

0.7 to 1.0

Latest growth rate range for the UK

-5% to -2% per day

[Details](#)

The contribution of science and technology for levelling up across the UK

Advice to the Prime Minister on how science and technology can help to address regional economic disparities across the UK and promote equality of opportunity.

[Details](#)

NHS England

NHS confirms COVID jab now offered at every eligible care home in England

In a major milestone for the NHS vaccination programme, nurses, GPs and other NHS staff have offered vaccination to people living at more than 10,000 care homes with older residents.

[Details](#)

COVID-19 vaccine communication materials

NHS England has produced videos of clinicians recording messages in some of the most commonly spoken languages to help ensure messages about the importance of getting a COVID-19 vaccine are clear for all.

[Details](#)

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

Healthy London Partnership: Transforming the care of children and young people (CYP) in London with asthma: Development of the London Asthma Standards

Key aims of the London Asthma Standards were to pull together local, national and international guidance concerning CYP asthma into one resource describing the entire asthma pathway and all organisations involved in the treatment/management/support of this patient group.

[Details](#)

Research and analysis from academic journals – non-coronavirus-related

The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health: Prevalence and trends in tobacco use among adolescents aged 13–15 years in 143 countries, 1999–2018: findings from the Global Youth Tobacco Surveys

Global prevalence of tobacco use among adolescents aged 13–15 years is substantial. Although the prevalence of cigarette smoking decreased over time in the majority of countries, the prevalence of the use of other tobacco products increased or did not change in the majority of countries during the past two decades.

[Abstract](#)

JAMA Internal Medicine: Association of Physical Activity Intensity With Mortality: A National Cohort Study of 403 681 US Adults

This study found that, for the same volume of moderate to vigorous physical activity, a higher proportion of vigorous physical activity (VPA) was associated with lower all-cause mortality. Authors suggest public health recommendations should advise on specific benefits of VPA.

[Abstract](#)

British Journal of Psychiatry: Effectiveness of exercise-based interventions in reducing depressive symptoms in people without clinical depression: systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials

Review (14 RCTs, n=1,737) found exercise-based interventions have a small effect on reduction of depressive symptoms in people without clinical depression; and may be an alternative to or complement psychological programmes, although long-term follow-up are needed.

[Abstract](#)

The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology: Trends in predominant causes of death in individuals with and without diabetes in England from 2001 to 2018: an epidemiological analysis of linked primary care records

Study (n=313, 907 with diabetes) reports a transition from vascular diseases to cancers as the leading contributor to diabetes-related death. Authors' state clinical and preventative approaches must reflect this trend to reduce excess mortality risk in diabetic individuals.

[Full text](#)

BMJ: Associations of cereal grains intake with cardiovascular disease and mortality across 21 countries in Prospective Urban and Rural Epidemiology study: prospective cohort study

Analysis of data from participants from low, middle, and high income countries, covering broad patterns of diet globally, found a higher intake of refined grains was associated with a higher risk of total mortality and major cardiovascular disease. No associations with the outcomes were found for whole grains or white rice

[Full text](#)

JECH: Biomarker-assessed passive smoking in relation to cause-specific mortality: pooled data from 12 prospective cohort studies comprising 36 584 individuals

The pooling of studies measuring salivary cotinine, a biomarker of passive smoking, was associated with elevated rates of mortality from various causes, effects which were independent of selected confounding variables. The magnitude of these relationships was, as anticipated, lower than those apparent for active smoking

[Full text](#)

Research and analysis from academic journals and preprints – coronavirus-related medRxiv (preprint): Preliminary Evidence on Long COVID in children

Data from a cohort of 129 Italian children showed over half had at least one symptom after 120 days, 42.6% being impaired by symptoms in daily activities. Common symptoms: fatigue, muscle and joint pain, headache, insomnia, respiratory problems and palpitations.

[Full text](#)

The Lancet preprint: Single Dose Administration, And The Influence Of The Timing Of The Booster Dose On Immunogenicity and Efficacy Of ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 (AZD1222) Vaccine

Analysis of additional data from trials involving 17 177 participants in the UK, Brazil, and South Africa. It includes the results of a further month of data collection with 332 cases of symptomatic covid-19—an additional 201 cases than were previously reported.

A single standard dose of vaccine provided 76% protection overall against symptomatic covid-19 in the first 90 days after vaccination with protection not falling in this time frame. Length of protection with a single dose is unclear as there were too few cases after 90 days to make any meaningful judgment.

The analyses suggest that it is the dosing interval and not the dosing level which has the greatest impact on the efficacy of the vaccine. The study found vaccine efficacy reached 82.4% after a second dose in those with a dosing interval of 12 weeks or more (95% CI: 62.7% to 91.7%). If the two doses were given less than six weeks apart the efficacy was only 54.9% (CI 32.7% to 69.7%).

[Full text](#)

The Lancet: Safety and efficacy of an rAd26 and rAd5 vector-based heterologous prime-boost COVID-19 vaccine: an interim analysis of a randomised controlled phase 3 trial in Russia

Interim analysis of Russian Gam-COVID-Vac, also known as Sputnik V, phase 3 trial involving nearly 20,000 participants suggests a two-dose regimen has an efficacy of 91.6% against symptomatic COVID-19. No serious adverse events were deemed to be associated with vaccination.

[Full text](#)

JECH: Risk of major cardiovascular events according to educational level before and after the initial COVID-19 public lockdown: a nationwide study

Danish study showed that COVID-19 lockdown is associated with a reduced incidence for major cardiovascular events, especially among low educated, elderly residents. This raises concern for undertreatment that without clinical awareness and action may widen the educational gap in cardiovascular morbidity and mortality

[Full text](#)

BMJ Open: Country-level determinants of the severity of the first global wave of the COVID-19 pandemic: an ecological study

Study (of 37 countries) reports international travel was directly associated with the mortality slope and thus potentially the spread of COVID-19. Authors' state very early restrictions on international travel should be considered to control COVID outbreaks and related deaths.

[Full text](#)

BMJ Analysis: Put to the test: use of rapid testing technologies for covid-19

This looks at how new technologies can be appropriately used to support different testing strategies and examines benefits and risks, noting rapid tests provide opportunities for early detection and isolation but must be integrated into wider strategies to control transmission.

[Full text](#)

BMJ Feature: Why aren't covid-19 vaccines being manufactured in standard prefilled syringes?

Review article discusses reasons why covid-19 vaccines are currently in multi-dose vials; stating this is largely explained by their emergency need, thus rendering even the fastest robotic arm for pre-filled syringes too slow.

[Full text](#)

BMJ Feature: Covid-19: How the UK is using lateral flow tests in the pandemic

Briefing addresses questions over their use and accuracy

[Full text](#)

BMJ Editor's Choice: Covid-19: Five steps to escape the cycle of lockdowns

[Full text](#)

BMJ news: Covid-19: People who have had infection might only need one dose of mRNA vaccine

Article refers to two studies. One study in 109 people (pre-print, not yet peer reviewed) found that two weeks after a single dose of vaccine, those who had previously had covid-19 had antibody concentrations up to 10x higher than levels seen in uninfected people after 2 doses. The second study in 59 healthcare workers (also not yet peer reviewed), found that those who had previously been infected with SARS-CoV-2 had a clear antibody response, which peaked at 10 and 14 days after vaccination. At all time points, healthcare workers with previous infection showed statistically significantly higher antibody levels than those who had not been infected.

[Full text](#)

BMJ news: Covid-19: Novavax vaccine efficacy is 86% against UK variant and 60% against South African variant

Preliminary data from clinical trials show that the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine produced by the US biotechnology company Novavax is 95.6% effective against the original variant of SARS-CoV-2 but also provides protection against the newer variants B.1.1.7 (85.6%) and B.1.351 (60%).

Meanwhile, Johnson & Johnson has reported that its one dose vaccine is 66% effective at preventing moderate to severe illness 28 days after vaccination.

[Full text](#)

BMJ news: Covid-19: WHO warns against “vaccine nationalism” or face further virus mutations

World Health Organization officials have voiced concerns at “vaccine nationalism” which could increase the risk of the coronavirus mutating further, after a dispute over a shortfall in EU supplies of covid-19 vaccines.

[Full text](#)

BMJ news: Covid-19: Israel sees new infections plummet following vaccinations

Early findings from Israel’s covid-19 vaccination programme suggest that the rollout of the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine is leading to fewer new infections and is at least 50% effective 13 to 24 days after the first dose.

[Full text](#)

BMJ Editorial: Covid-19: Social murder, they wrote—elected, unaccountable, and unrepentant

Editorial argues that, after two million deaths, we must have redress for mishandling the pandemic.

[Full text](#)

BMJ Editorial: What went wrong in the global governance of covid-19?

The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response’s second report highlights several key problems in the global governance of covid-19: WHO’s position, structure, and lack of financing; excessive focus on metrics to the detriment of political analysis; a lack of coordinated and sufficient

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financing for pandemic preparedness and response; global vaccine inequities; and the role of the broader global health architecture.

[Full text](#)

The Lancet Editorial: Genomic sequencing in pandemics

What should an appropriate genomic surveillance system look like?

[Full text](#)

UK Biobank

UK Biobank SARS-CoV-2 Serology Study

Large study (n=18,893) reports 25% of people with previous covid-19 infection were completely asymptomatic, 40% did not have one of the three classic symptoms, 99% of people retained antibodies for 3 months after being infected and 88% did so for at least six months.

[Details](#)

[Press release](#)

COVID Symptom Study

Zoe app study of almost 40,000 people receiving Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine reports findings

Feedback from people who had received at least one dose of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine found 37% experienced some local side-effects (45% after two doses) and 14% (22% after 2nd dose) had a systemic effect (e.g. fever, aches or chills) within 7 days.

The MHRA has published its first report on adverse reactions to approved Covid-19 vaccines, submitted via the Yellow Card Scheme. There were 22,820 reports over the time period studied, equivalent to a rate of 3 in 1,000 doses; the majority were injection-site reactions and generalised symptoms such as 'flu-like illness'.

[Details](#)

[MHRA report](#)

National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)

Obesity may exacerbate the effects of Alzheimer's disease

Analysis of brain images from 47 patients clinically diagnosed with mild Alzheimer's, 68 patients with mild cognitive impairment and 57 cognitively healthy individuals showed a positive association between obesity and grey matter volume around the right temporoparietal junction in mild dementia patients. This suggests obesity might contribute toward neural vulnerability in cognitively healthy individuals and those with mild cognitive impairment. The study also found that maintaining a healthy weight in mild Alzheimer's disease could help preserve brain structure in the presence of age and disease-related weight loss.

[Details](#)

Office for National Statistics

The percentage of people testing positive in the UK has decreased but remains high

5 February 2021

An estimated 1 in 65 people tested positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19) within the community population in England during the week ending 30 January 2021, equating to 846,900 people, or 1.55% of the population.

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This is lower than the week ending 23 January 2021, when 1,018,700 people (1.87%) were estimated to have COVID-19 in England.

The percentage of people testing positive in Wales remained level. An estimated 42,700 people, around 1 in 70 or 1.40% of the population, had the virus during the week ending 30 January.

In Northern Ireland, the percentage of people testing positive decreased. An estimated 28,700 people had COVID-19 in the week ending 30 January, equating to 1 in 65 people or 1.56% of the population.

In Scotland, the percentage of people testing positive decreased in the week ending 30 January, at around 1 in 115 people, equating to an estimated 46,100 people or 0.88% of the population.

New variant

In England in the week ending 30 January 2021, the percentage of people testing positive that were compatible with the new UK variant levelled off in the East of England and decreased in all other regions except Yorkshire and the Humber and the East Midlands, where the trend was uncertain. Cases where the virus is too low for the variant to be identified have increased in the West Midlands and decreased in the North East, North West, Yorkshire and The Humber, London and the South East.

[Details](#)

COVID-19 infections and hospital admissions fell in most English regions, but deaths are still rising

5 February 2021

The percentage of people testing positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19) fell or remained level in all English regions apart from the East of England in the week ending 30 January 2021. COVID-19 hospital admission rates also fell in every region in the week ending 31 January but are still at almost double the levels seen in early December 2020.

Although infections and hospitalisations appear to be falling, deaths involving COVID-19 continued to increase in every English region in the week ending 22 January 2021. The South East saw both the largest increase and the highest number of deaths in this period.

[Details](#)

Percentage of deaths involving COVID-19 rises to highest of the pandemic

2 February 2021

There were 8,422 deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19) in England and Wales in the week ending 22 January 2021 – the second highest weekly figure of the pandemic (behind the week ending 17 April 2020).

Deaths involving COVID-19 accounted for 45.1% of the 18,676 deaths from all causes in the week ending 22 January. This is the highest percentage recorded since the start of the pandemic.

COVID-19 mortality increased in all nine English regions, with the East Midlands, the East, the South East and the South West seeing record numbers of deaths involving COVID-19.

In contrast, Wales saw a slight drop in COVID-19 deaths, ending a run of six consecutive weekly increases.

[Details](#)

Highest percentage of people with antibodies in England are those aged 80 and over

3 February 2021

More than one in four (25.7%) of the population aged 80 and over in England would have tested positive for antibodies to SARS-Cov-2, the virus that causes the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the 28 days to 18 January 2021.

This age group, which only includes those in private households, had the largest percentage of people in England testing positive for antibodies, which the body makes to fight infection.

The true figure may be higher as the survey did not test people in care homes, and this group was the priority for receiving a vaccination.

Our results are only starting to see the effect of the UK vaccination programmes and we will be closely monitoring its impact on antibody positivity.

[Details](#)

Personal well-being measures all fell significantly during 2020 compared with 2019

4 February 2021

The coronavirus pandemic appears to have negatively affected the UK population's well-being, with personal well-being measures significantly lower in the second and third quarters of 2020 compared with the same periods the previous year.

Life Satisfaction and anxiety got worse in Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2020 compared with Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2020, when the UK first was put in lockdown. Recorded anxiety was at the highest level since our records began in 2011. In April, the first wave of coronavirus cases hit a peak, with the number of COVID-19 deaths reaching 1073 in a 24-hour period.

In Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2020, average ratings of anxiety and happiness significantly improved compared to the previous quarter. This “bounce back” in well-being coincides with easing of lockdown measures, that allowed people return to more aspects of normal life. A reduction in cases of the virus, hospitalisations and deaths also provided a sense that things were less dangerous and therefore less worrying.

[Details](#)

Quarterly alcohol specific deaths in England and Wales: 2001 to 2019 registrations and Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) to Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2020 provisional registrations. February 2021

Provisional data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) covers the period during and after the first lockdown last year.¹ These show there were 5460 deaths related to alcohol specific causes registered between January and September 2020—a 16.4% increase compared with the same nine-month period in 2019 (3732 deaths). Three quarters of these deaths (79.8%) were caused by alcoholic liver disease. A peak alcohol specific death rate of 12.8 deaths per 100 000 people was reached in the first three months of 2020, from January to March—the highest since records started in 2001—and it stayed high.

[Details](#)

Social care: Estimating the size of the self-funding population

Currently, the data on people who self-fund their care is limited. With differences in how data is collected in local authorities and by care providers, there is a significant gap in understanding how care is funded and the impact that has on the adult social care sector. This blog explains how the ONS are working to help fill this evidence gap.

[Details](#)

Samaritans

Engaging men earlier: a guide to service design

This handbook aims to provide a set of principles upon which wellbeing initiatives for men should be based. It is aimed at anyone commissioning, designing, evaluating or delivering initiatives, services or activities aimed at improving the wellbeing of men.

[Details](#)

Institute for Government
Whitehall Monitor 2021

This report reveals the way the pandemic has changed how the government takes decisions, spends money and makes policy. Last year saw a drop in the government's transparency on its spending, only a small proportion of Covid contracts awarded on a competitive basis, and many policy U-turns. And 2020 also saw the highest number of 'ministerial directions' – formal instructions for civil servants to continue with a policy despite their concerns about value for money or feasibility – for decades.

[Details](#)

Coronavirus: no going back to normal

Life after coronavirus will not feel like life before. This viewpoint states that it is best that governments acknowledge that and start planning now in order to capture the best that can come out of a very tough period while not raising expectations that life will suddenly snap back to an almost forgotten normal.

[Details](#)

Local Government Association

Serious child harm cases reported by councils rise by more than a quarter during pandemic

The number of serious child-related incidents reported by councils has risen by more than a quarter during the pandemic. The largest increase related to young children, with incidents involving those aged one to five rising by 50% in 2020/21. The number of notices relating to child deaths during this period also increased by 34%, from 89 to 119.

[Details](#)

The King's Fund

Collaboration, respect and humility: directors of public health responding locally to Covid-19

Directors of public health are uniquely qualified to respond to a pandemic. Their remit is diverse, and while it varies across different local authorities, their training and expertise in population health, health protection and improvement, and infectious disease control places them at the heart of decision-making in local systems.

[Details](#)

Covid-19 recovery and resilience: what can health and care learn from other disasters?

What do communities need to be able to recover from Covid-19 and build resilience? This long read identifies key insights from people involved in disaster recovery around the world.

[Details](#)

Royal Society for Public Health

Survey reveals the mental and physical health impacts of home working during Covid-19

With working from home set to continue for millions of UK workers, research by RSPH shows that there are key health and wellbeing disparities between different groups of people who made the move to home working as a result of Covid-19.

[Details](#)

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Nuffield Trust

Can variation help to explain the rise in emergency admissions for children aged under five up to 2018/19?

Children under the age of five accounted for ten per cent of emergency attendances and nine per cent of emergency admissions in 2018/19, despite representing less than six per cent of the population – what might some of the factors behind this be? This research considers some of the data and service-related issues that may be affecting this troubling observation. A further research appendix provides further charts and analysis that look at the issue in more depth.

[Details](#)

The pressure on NHS critical care beds

Latest chart of the week looks at the number of critical care beds that have been used to treat patients this winter. The NHS has had to continually expand the number of beds due to rising numbers of Covid-19 patients, and is working well above usual capacity despite limited numbers of available staff.

[Details](#)

QualityWatch indicator updates

Concerns have been raised about the impact of lockdowns and social distancing measures on the wider determinants of health, and how the pandemic could exacerbate health inequalities. The latest indicator updates from QualityWatch examines trends in public health services, including around smoking, substance misuse, and sexual and reproductive health.

[Details](#)

Health Creation Alliance

How can Primary Care Networks succeed in reducing health inequalities?

Report from a series of multi-stakeholder events held during 2020.

[Details](#)

EuroHealthNet

Public health foresight in light of Covid-19

In 2020, a group of senior public health officials from national and regional public health agencies across Europe came together to discuss current developments in public health and implications for the future. This report reflects their insights into some of the most pressing societal challenges and trends for public health in the years ahead, adopting a broad definition of health that encompasses social and environmental factors. This exercise was led by EuroHealthNet and the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM).

[Details](#)