



# COVID -19 AND CANCER– AN UPDATE ON SHIELDING



The government advice to 'shield' has been paused. It is understandable that you may be anxious about stopping shielding and going out more.

It's important to remember that government guidance is advisory – it's up to you exactly what you choose to do to protect yourself. The guidance covers a huge range of people whose risk of developing coronavirus and becoming unwell varies.

We know that the majority of patients with cancer especially those on chemotherapy/ immunotherapy and receiving radiotherapy are at higher risk from Covid but the risk is not the same for all types of cancer and all treatment.

## **Your individual risk depends on a number of things, these include:**

- your type of cancer
- the treatment you are having or when you finished treatment
- any other health issues you have
- your age
- your ethnicity
- where you live.

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**It is important to follow the guidance for your local area especially if there is a local lockdown and also to be aware of your individual risk. The Government is advising you to adopt strict social distancing rather than full shielding measures. This means:**

- You may wish to go out to more places and see more people but you should take care to minimise contact with others outside your household or support bubble.
- You can go outside to buy food, to places of worship and for exercise but you should maintain strict social distancing (this means keeping 2 metres away from others wherever possible, or 1 metre where this isn't possible but you can take other precautions).

- If you are working whilst on treatment you can go to work, if you cannot work from home, as long as the business is COVID-secure. It is important you speak to your manager, occupational health department or HR department before you return to work if possible.
- You should continue to wash your hands well and often, and keep frequently touched areas in your home and/or workspace as clean as possible.
- You should follow the guidance on wearing a mask.
- You should avoid visiting areas experiencing a local lockdown, where the risk of catching coronavirus is higher.
- You will no longer receive free food parcels, automatic medicine deliveries though many hospitals are still doing this for chemotherapy or the basic care from the National Shielding Service.
- If your local Hospital offers any additional services to replace this they will advise you.

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## **You can still access:**

- prescriptions, essential items and food delivered by NHS Volunteer Responders
- priority supermarket slots (if you previously registered for these)
- local volunteer support.



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## **Practical things you can do to protect yourself, as guidelines change**

**If you go outside, it's important to follow social distancing measures carefully and maintain good hygiene. This means you should:**

- keep 2 metres away from other people (unless they are in your support bubble)
- avoid touching your mouth, nose or eyes
- avoid touching surfaces others may touch (if this is unavoidable, you should use hand sanitiser/wash your hands as soon as you can).
- wash your hands thoroughly (for around 20 seconds) as soon as you get back.

**You may also want to consider:**

- going out when it's quieter (for example, first thing in the morning or in the evening)
- avoiding places that you know will be busy such as supermarkets/ pubs.
- wearing gloves
- wearing a face mask/face covering all the time
- where you live.

Please DO NOT book any holidays without checking it this is safe for you with your healthcare team.

Most people on treatment are advised not to go abroad during and after for a few months after finishing treatment and now even travel in the UK may not be a good idea. Treatment should not be delayed for holidays but only if there is a medical reason to do so.

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**You may have been given other advice by your healthcare team when you started treatment and this still applies as well and may include:**

- certain foods to avoid especially take away food ( neutropaenic diet)
- avoiding crowded places such as supermarkets
- being careful not to see family and friends outside your household if they are unwell
- what you should do about work depending on your job
- what you should do about education or training.

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**You should remain cautious as you are still at risk of severe illness if you catch coronavirus, so the advice is to stay at home where possible, not to have large social gathering even at home and to follow strict social distancing.**

**If you are concerned please speak to the team caring for you about what you need to do as they can give you advice based on your personal situation.**