

Coronavirus (COVID-19): information on shielding for children, young people and families

As we learn more about coronavirus and are subject to another national lockdown, guidance is changing around who should take extra steps to protect themselves and what those steps should be. The vast majority of children and young people, even those with underlying conditions, do not need to formally 'shield' in the same way as clinically extremely vulnerable adults are required to shield. You might receive a text or letter from the Government and/or Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) to let you know that your child needs to start or stop 'shielding'. We know that this can cause a great deal of anxiety, so we've put together some advice from GOSH to clarify what this means for your child and your family.

Although COVID-19 does affect children, very few children develop severe symptoms, even if they have an underlying health condition, including a weakened immune system. This does not mean we should not protect our children, but we can adapt the shielding advice for adult patients, so it is child-friendly and appropriate.

We've also since learned more about the impact of long-term shielding on children and young people's physical and mental health. It is very important that we balance protecting them from COVID-19 with their general safety and wellbeing.

As national experts in children's health, the [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health](#) (RCPCH) has reviewed the Government's latest shielding advice and updated the list of children and young people who should be considered as 'clinically extremely vulnerable' to COVID-19 and therefore should 'shield' during this latest lockdown. Your clinical team will contact you if your child needs to shield. Only a few children need to shield in this

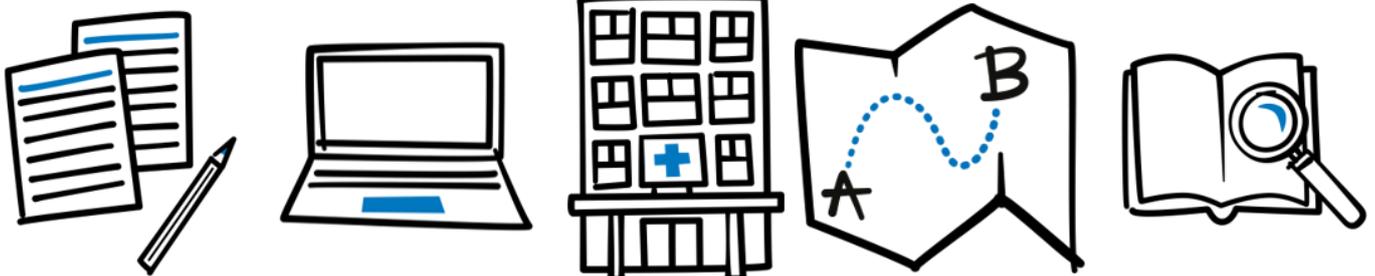
lockdown, as we learn more about the virus and how it affects children and young people.

At GOSH, we're consulting both the RCPCH guidance and the Government's carefully, reviewing lists of patients who are being advised to shield, and providing advice for specific patient groups.

How do I shield my child?

Children are aware of anxiety and pick up the concerns of adults. This is a stressful time for everyone, and your child might be particularly in need of comfort, care and attention because of this. Children need to be cared for by their families, and this means there are additional things to consider when they are isolated from others.

We advise you to institute measures that are possible and safe for your child and family. We have put together some advice below to support you with following the Government guidelines to



keep your child safe, while also keeping them well looked after, happy and able to be comforted if they are upset. You should read this alongside the latest [Government guidance on shielding](#).

If your child has been advised to 'shield', here are some recommendations for how you can achieve this:

- We advise that your child and everyone else in your household stay home as much as possible. The only people who should enter your home are the essential carers who support your child.
- Depending on where you live and advice from your clinical team, your child may be able to spend some time outdoors if they wish, though this should be kept to a minimum. If your child does go outside, it's very important that they only spend time with people from their household and they try to keep a 2m distance from everyone else.
- Others in the household should only attend school or work if strict social distancing can be followed.
- If other people in your household must make regular trips outside, such as travelling to work, contact your clinical team for advice.
- Try to limit sharing of toys and other items between your shielding child and other children. If that is not possible, ensure that everyone who plays with the toys washes their hands thoroughly before they pick them up, and where possible, use antibacterial wipes to wipe down toys in between use.
- We also recommend separate bath times for children, with your vulnerable child being bathed first, and no sharing of towels and flannels.

- It is vital that those shielding also continue to follow widely published precautions to avoid infection, including social distancing, keeping good hand hygiene and avoiding touching their eyes, nose and mouth.

If someone in the household develops symptoms

It is advisable that the carer who is well and does not have symptoms stays with the child and keeps separate from other members of the family if possible. Contact your clinical team for advice.

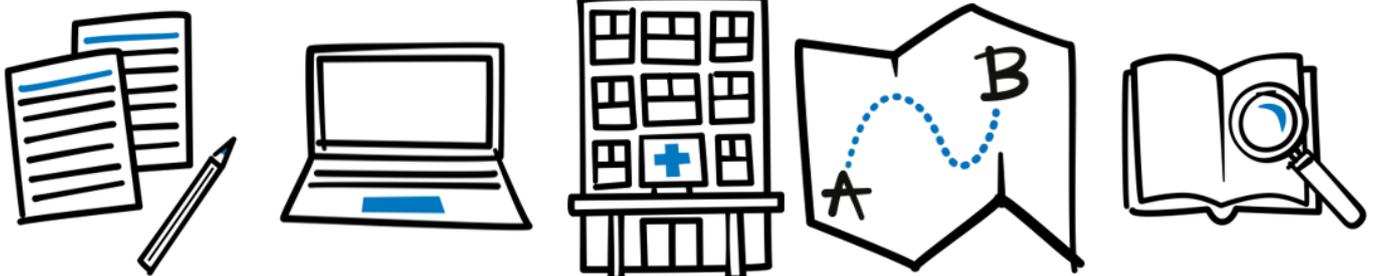
Advice from your specialty team

It is important to remember any existing advice given to you by your specialty team for your child's wellbeing, which is not related to COVID-19. This advice should continue to be observed at all times. You can access our [specialty guidance](#) here.

It is important not to stop any medication without first discussing this with your specialty team. If your child becomes unwell, and you would normally attend your local hospital, please call them as normal. If they are unable to offer the usual review please contact your GOSH team.

If you're very worried about your child or you feel their life is at risk, please call 999 or take them to A&E or an urgent care centre as you normally would. They are open for all children who need care and are safe to attend.

If any of this advice changes, we will update this information. We also recommend you keep an eye on our FAQs at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-FAQ, which are regularly updated.



We're here to help

We recognise that some families may find it difficult to shield. GOSH has a number of support services available to families to help you cope and follow the guidance. As well as speaking to your child's clinical team, please contact the PALS team on 020 7829 7862 or pals@gosh.nhs.uk for confidential support and advice.

Other sources of information and support

Coronavirus (COVID-19) hub from GOSH – <https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-information-hub>

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) – <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/covid-19-resources-parents-carers>

