

# Coronavirus (COVID-19) and vulnerable children and young people: information for families

**You might have recently received a letter from the Government advising you to either isolate or 'shield' your immunocompromised or vulnerable child to keep them safe from coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. We understand that this can cause a great deal of anxiety, and so are writing to clarify what this means for your child and your family.**

You may have seen reports in the news and be concerned about the risk of COVID-19 to your child. Although COVID-19 does affect children, it appears that in most children it causes either no, or very mild symptoms. This is true even in those children with underlying health problems who we might normally worry about being particularly vulnerable to infections.

This does not mean we should not protect our children, but it does mean that we can adapt the advice given to adult patients with underlying health problems so it is child-friendly and appropriate. It is particularly important that we do not jeopardise their general safety and well-being while protecting them from COVID-19.

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 in isolation.

We have put together some advice to help you ensure you follow 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.

## Social distancing and shielding

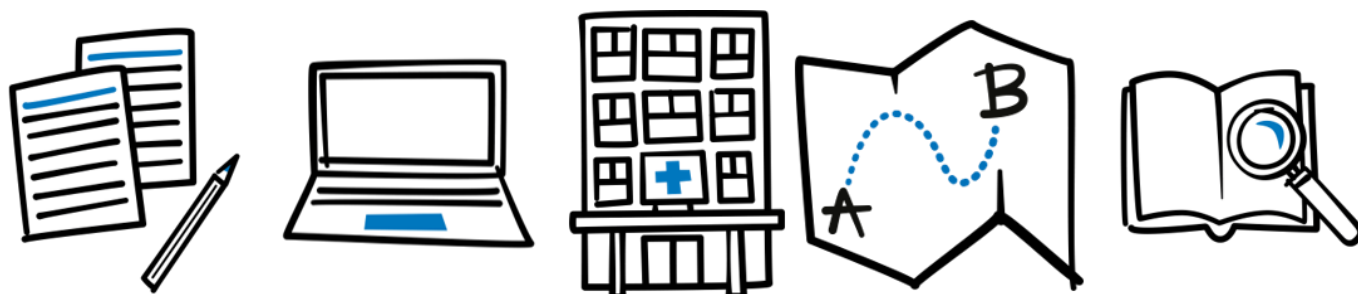
Everyone in the country has now been advised to practise social distancing, so you and your family can and should follow the government advice regarding this on the NHS website (details below).

If you have been advised that your child is to be 'shielded', here are some recommendations for how you can achieve this.

We advise that if the whole family is isolated, and the only visitors into the house are essential carers, then the child need not be separated from the rest of their immediate family.

It is vital to follow strict hand hygiene, separate bath times for children with your vulnerable child being bathed first, and no sharing of utensils.

In extreme cases, if more than one adult who is close to the child is present in the house, one carer can be 'shielded' together with the child and stay separate from other members of the household. We recognise this may not always be possible.



Try to limit sharing of toys between your vulnerable child and other children, we advise you to institute those measures which are possible and safe for your child and family. 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.

### **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. If this is not possible, then taking whatever precautions can be taken is likely to be sufficient.

## **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.

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 are due to attend GOSH, and you have difficulties getting to your appointment, or your child has symptoms of COVID-19, please call the relevant specialty for further assistance before attending GOSH. Your specialty teams will have sent you their particular advice along with this letter, which should answer any additional questions you might have. You can also access our specialty guidance at [www.gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-specialty-guides](http://www.gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-specialty-guides).

If any of this advice changes, we will contact you.

## **Further information and support**

### **From GOSH**

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) - [www.gosh.nhs.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-information-hub](http://www.gosh.nhs.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-information-hub) - translations of this information in languages other than English as well as Easy Read versions are online too.

### **From elsewhere**

- Information from the NHS at [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)
- Information for children is available on the BBC Newsround website at [www.bbc.co.uk/newsround](http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround)

