

Coronavirus (COVID-19) – information for children, young people and families

We understand that you might be worried about coronavirus – also known as COVID-19 – particularly if your child has a long-term health condition. This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) sets out our advice and the action we are taking to respond to the coronavirus outbreak. You can find [guidance for specific patient groups here](#). Visit gosh.nhs.uk/staysafe to meet Otto the Octopus and find out how you can help reduce the spread of infection, whether you're out and about or visiting GOSH.

As we're regularly updating this guidance, if you'd like to share it please link directly to gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-FAQ, rather than quoting or summarising what we've said.

We are following official guidance from the NHS, UK Government and World Health Organisation. The situation is changing constantly so we will update this information as needed – you can always check the GOV.UK website at www.gov.uk/coronavirus for up-to-the-minute advice.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

A: This is a virus that affects the lungs and therefore people's breathing.

Q: What are the symptoms?

A: The main symptoms are:

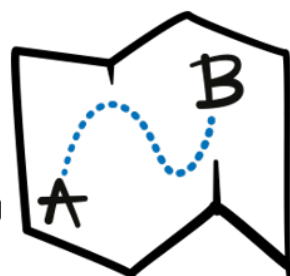
- New, continuous cough
- High temperature
- Loss of or change to your sense of smell or taste.

However, these are similar to lots of other common illnesses. The only way you can be sure if someone has coronavirus is to test them. Read more about symptoms of COVID-19 at nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/.

If you, your child or anyone else in your household has symptoms of COVID-19, please do not visit your doctor or pharmacist – stay at home and use the NHS 111 online service at 111.nhs.uk for urgent medical advice.

However, if you are worried about your child or feel their life is at risk, you should call 999 or go to your local A&E or urgent care centre as you normally would.

If you are due to attend GOSH and you or your child has symptoms of COVID-19, please call their speciality team for advice and support before visiting the hospital.



Q: Does COVID-19 affect children?

A: The evidence to date (October 2020) suggests that although children do develop COVID-19, very few children develop severe symptoms, even if they have an underlying health condition.

At GOSH, we are taking extra precautions to keep our patients safe, like changing the way we run some of our services and providing [specialty guidance](#) for patients, including those who may be considered immunocompromised or part of a vulnerable group.

Q. Should I be worried about ‘multisystem inflammatory syndrome’, or symptoms of fever and abdominal pain?

A: If your child has symptoms including a fever, diarrhoea and abdominal pain, call NHS 111 or access the service online at 111.nhs.uk. If you're very worried about your child, 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.

You may have seen reports in the media of very unwell children being admitted to hospital with an inflammatory syndrome characterised by symptoms including fever, abdominal pain, diarrhoea and skin rashes.

This inflammatory syndrome is affecting only a small number of children, but it's really important that if you do have concerns about your child, you seek urgent treatment. We will continue to follow the latest understanding of this syndrome to make sure we can best care for these patients.

Q: My child has a long-term health condition, what should I do?

A: Our clinical teams are providing specific information for children and young people with underlying health problems, in line with advice from national bodies. You can find guidance for specific patient groups at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-specialty-guides.

If you have been asked to start or stop ‘shielding’ your child, you can find more information below.

If you have any questions or concerns, please seek advice from the GOSH teams involved in your child’s care. An easy and secure way to keep in touch is the MyGOSH online portal. Find out more at gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh. Please also consult the latest NHS guidance at nhs.uk.

Q: The NHS has contacted me stating that my child is at the highest clinical risk during the COVID-19 pandemic. What should I do?

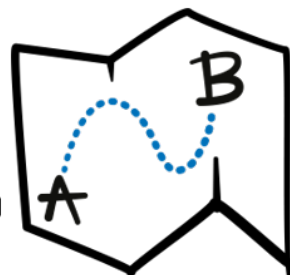
A: The NHS is contacting anyone identified as being extremely vulnerable to, or at highest clinical risk from COVID-19. You may have received guidance from the NHS in the form of a letter, a text, or both. If you are concerned about this advice, or it is contrary to what you have been told by your clinical team, please contact your clinical team directly.

‘Shielding’ is currently paused so your child can return to their normal activities unless otherwise advised by your specialty team. However, the guidance may change and we recommend you check the latest advice on the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) [website](#).

We appreciate that this advice might cause anxiety, so we have put together some special guidance for families who have been advised to shield, advised to stop shielding, or are unsure whether their child should be shielded. You can access this online at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-and-vulnerable-children.

As we learn more about the virus, there may be more changes to the list of patient groups that need to shield and what shielding means. Our clinical teams are reviewing shielded patient lists and will contact you if they have any further guidance for your child.

We recognise that some families may find it difficult to shield their child – we’re here to help.



GOSH has a number of support services available to families to help you cope and stay shielded. 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.

Q: My child hasn't been advised to 'shield' by the NHS, but I think they should have been. What should I do?

A: It may help to look at the shielding lists outlined by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health ([RCPCH website](https://www.rcpch.ac.uk)). If you're still unsure, please contact your clinical team. As we learn more about how the virus affects different groups of people, this guidance may be updated.

As well as patients, the NHS has also been contacting clinicians to outline the groups advised to shield. This is so that they, including clinicians at GOSH, can review their patient lists and add in any patients they think should be on the shielding list.

You can also find advice from your child's clinical team in our specialty guidance sheets at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-specialty-guides, and advice about shielding children at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-and-vulnerable-children.

If you have any questions or concerns about shielding your child, please contact your clinical team.

Q: What precautions should we take?

A: National guidance is changing to allow people in England to spend more time outside of their homes, including some children going back to school. However, everyone in the UK should still keep a safe distance from others when out and about, and avoid large gatherings. You can find more information on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

Everyone should also take the widely published precautions to avoid infection, including keeping good hand hygiene, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth. The public is also being

advised to wear face coverings when it's hard to stay a safe distance from people, including on public transport and in hospitals. If you or your child wear one, please make sure you are able to wear it correctly. To see this advice in action and learn how to keep yourself and others safe, watch our family-friendly animation featuring Otto the Octopus at gosh.nhs.uk/staysafe.

Please note that restrictions on travel, work and time spent outdoors may differ depending on where you live in the UK. There are now three 'tiers' of restrictions – find out which tier you live in on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

There are also several areas of the UK that are subject to local lockdown – more information about what this means is available from the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

If your child or a member of your family develops symptoms of COVID-19, please do not go to your GP or pharmacist – stay at home and use the NHS 111 online service at 111.nhs.uk for urgent medical advice and inform your clinical team at GOSH.

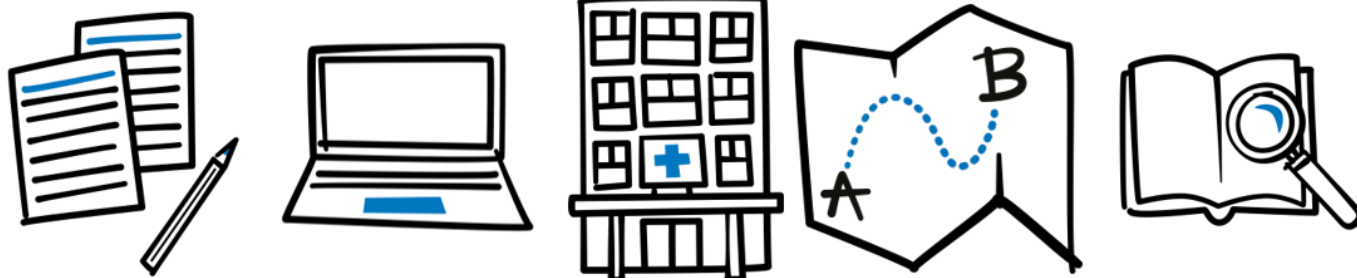
Q: Should my child stop taking their medication if they develop COVID-19?

A: No, taking medication as prescribed is very important and not taking it could make your child's condition worse. Please consult your specialty team before making any decisions regarding your child's medication.

Q: What should I do if my child becomes unwell for reasons unrelated to COVID-19?

A: If there are changes to your child's underlying condition, please contact the GOSH teams involved in your child's care as you usually would.

An easy and secure way to do this is through the MyGOSH online portal at gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh. We are doing our best to respond to your queries quickly, but this might take a little longer than usual in some cases.



You can also call NHS 111 or visit 111.nhs.uk for medical advice, 24 hours a day. However, if you are worried about your child or feel their life is at risk, you should always call 999 or go to your local A&E or urgent care centre as you normally would.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) has produced [a helpful poster for parents and carers](#) who may be worried or unsure about what to do if their child is unwell or injured during the COVID-19 outbreak.

It is important to follow Government advice, but remember that NHS 111, GPs and hospitals are continuing to provide safe care should your family need it.

Please note that the RCPCH poster provides general advice for all children. It doesn't take into account your child's specific condition or their personal health and care plan. If you have any questions, please seek advice from the GOSH teams involved in your child's care.

Q: Will my child's upcoming appointment or admission be cancelled?

A: To make sure we can deliver care to children and young people who need it most urgently, we have changed the way we run some of our services, including postponing some procedures, appointments and admissions.

Our clinical teams are looking at each patient carefully to work out which patients absolutely need to come into hospital, which clinics and consultations can be done another way such as video or phone calls, and which appointments, procedures and admissions can be rescheduled safely.

We appreciate your patience as we make sure this happens safely.

If we do need to postpone your child's procedure, admission or appointment, we will contact you directly as soon as we can. We hope you understand that this might take a little longer than usual and we may not be able to give you details

of the new appointment or admission date just now.

Q: My child's appointment or admission was postponed or cancelled. I'm worried the delay will affect their health.

A: We know delays to treatment can cause great anxiety, particularly when we might not be able to give you a new date for your appointment or admission.

Your child's health remains our number one priority. Our clinical teams are looking at every patient individually, and prioritising procedures, treatments and appointments for those who most need our care (in order of clinical priority).

We've found that virtual appointments are a great way of carrying out consultations when we can't bring your child into the hospital just yet.

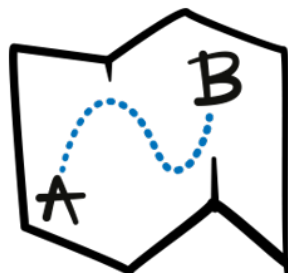
We know how worrying delays can be and we are doing our best to minimise these while making sure we provide care safely and in line with advice from the Government.

If you have any questions or are worried about your visits to GOSH, get in touch with your clinical team through the MyGOSH online portal gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh.

Q: My child has a confirmed appointment or admission coming up. What do we need to know before we arrive?

A: Our doctors and infection control specialists have been working together closely and listening carefully to national guidance to ensure we can provide your child with the care they need at GOSH safely.

If you are due to visit GOSH and you, or your child, is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or you think you may have come into close contact with someone affected, please call your child's speciality team for support before visiting the hospital. Please do not go to your GP or pharmacist – stay at home and use the NHS 111



online service at 111.nhs.uk for urgent medical advice.

If you are coming to GOSH, there are some guidelines and behaviours we're asking families to follow, both before your visit and while you're at the hospital. These are an important part of the measures we've put in place to keep everyone at the hospital – patients, families, our staff – as safe as possible.

Before your visit, we recommend that you watch our family-friendly animation at gosh.nhs.uk/staysafe to meet Otto the Octopus and learn about the four ways you can help us reduce the spread of infection. This includes wearing a face mask at all times while you're at GOSH, unless you're at your child's bedside, or eating or drinking. Your child may also be asked to wear a mask when they move around the hospital. This is in line with the latest national guidance.

We will provide masks for you and your child, but if your child isn't able to wear one, for example if they're very young, that's fine. When wearing a mask, make sure it covers your nose, mouth and chin. Try not to touch it while it's on. Take it off using the loops and clean your hands after you throw it away.

As a precaution during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are limiting visitors to the hospital. While we understand that this will be difficult for families, it is helping us greatly reduce the risk of infection, keeping you, your child and everyone else at GOSH safer. We have worked with government guidance and experts in infection control to ensure that our guidance is correct, which means that from Monday 26th October 2020:

- If your child has an outpatient appointment, only one carer will be allowed into the hospital. Unfortunately, siblings will not be able to visit.
- If your child is staying on a ward, ideally only one parent or carer should visit during their stay but a maximum of two carers

from the same household or support bubble may visit, one each day. Parents and carers from different households or social bubbles will not be able to visit and unfortunately, siblings will not be able to visit the hospital.

We know there will be exceptional circumstances where it will be necessary to vary these rules. If you feel this is the case for your family, please contact your child's clinical team to discuss your child's needs directly if we haven't already been in touch – they will then decide what exceptions, if any, can be accommodated.

If your child is coming to GOSH for a planned admission, you can find everything you need to know before you arrive at gosh.nhs.uk/admissions-during-covid-19.

If you're coming to GOSH for an outpatient appointment, you should arrive no more than ten minutes before your child's appointment time. This will help us make sure waiting areas don't get too crowded. For everything else you need to know before your outpatient appointment, please read our special guidance at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-outpatients.

If you have any questions or concerns about your upcoming trip to GOSH, please contact the PALS team on 020 7829 7862 or pals@gosh.nhs.uk or your clinical team via MyGOSH at gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh

Q: What should we expect when we arrive?

A: When you visit GOSH, you may notice that things look or run slightly differently than previously. These steps have been put in place to keep everyone at GOSH as safe as possible. Things may continue to change as we respond to the latest guidance, but we will always contact you if there are any major changes to your child's appointment, admission or procedure.

When you arrive at one of our main entrances, only one adult will be allowed to enter the hospital.



Unfortunately, no siblings will be able to visit. Where possible, our GOSH Guides will then take you to the ward or give you directions. If other family members must travel with you to GOSH, they will need to wait outside. We ask that they follow social distancing guidelines and stay two metres away from other people in the area.

We'll provide face masks for you to wear at all times while you're at GOSH, unless you're at your child's bedside, or eating or drinking. In some cases we may also ask you to wear a mask at your child's bedside, for instance if you are visiting the hospital while in a quarantine period as a household. If this is the case your clinical team will explain the rules to you.

Your child may also be asked to wear a mask when they move around the hospital. This is in line with the latest national guidance. We will provide masks for you and your child, but if your child isn't able to wear one, for example if they're very young, that's fine. When wearing a mask, make sure it covers your nose, mouth and chin. Try not to touch it while it's on. Take it off using the loops and clean your hands after you throw it away.

We may need to test your child for COVID-19, even if they do not have symptoms. The test involves collecting a bit of mucus from their nose and/or throat, using a small tube or cotton bud. It might be a little uncomfortable and make them cough or sneeze. This will help us ensure we keep you, your child and everyone else at GOSH as safe as possible. You can find out exactly what's involved at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-testing.

You may notice other changes as you move around the hospital, for example one-way systems and new waiting area layouts. These changes are helping us to reopen services safely and we appreciate your support in making sure everyone follows the new guidance.

Please also check our specialty FAQs at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-specialty-guides. These

may include specific advice for your child and what to expect when you visit GOSH.

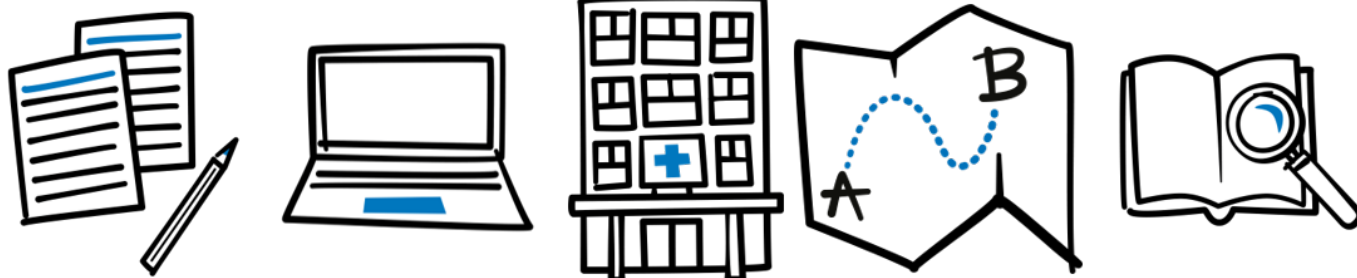
Q: What are you doing to protect visitors to the hospital?

A: We understand that some families might be worried about visiting GOSH during the COVID-19 pandemic. We want you to know that your safety, and the safety of all our patients, families and staff, is our number one priority.

You might notice fewer hospital staff around the building. We have thought very carefully about how many people we need to deliver care safely to our patients, while minimising the number of people in the building. Our clinical teams have been reviewing every procedure, admission and appointment carefully to determine which patients are able to come to the hospital, which appointments can be delivered by other means, and which can be delayed safely. They have also been looking at the way we run our clinics and services, making changes to things like the layout of waiting areas and reducing the need for you to travel around the hospital.

We are also advising staff, patients and families to follow social distancing and handwashing guidelines wherever possible. You might notice our friendly starfish floor stickers around the hospital, reminding everyone to keep a safe distance. You can watch our family-friendly animation at gosh.nhs.uk/staysafe to meet Otto the octopus and learn what you can do to avoid the spread of infection at GOSH.

You will see staff wearing various types of personal protective equipment (PPE), like masks and aprons. They're trained on how to reduce the risk of passing on the virus within the hospital, including when masks and other types of PPE should be worn and how cleaning activities should be carried out across the hospital. This is based on the latest national guidance for COVID-19 infection control.



While at GOSH, you and your child will be asked to wear a mask during your visit. This is in line with the latest guidance and will help us protect all patients, families and staff, especially those at increased risk because of COVID-19. We know some children won't be able to wear a mask, for example if they're very young. It's very important that you put on and dispose of your mask properly. You'll be given guidance on how to do this when you visit the hospital, but if you're unsure or have any questions, please speak to a member of the clinical team.

Q: What about testing?

A: We're listening carefully to the latest national guidance on COVID-19 testing, to make sure we keep you, your family and our staff as safe as possible. In line with the latest advice, we are now testing certain groups of patients at GOSH.

The test will involve collecting a bit of mucus from the nose and/or throat, using a small tube or cotton bud. It might be a little uncomfortable and make your child cough or sneeze. Find out exactly what's involved at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-testing.

This will help us ensure we keep you, your child and everyone else at GOSH as safe as possible. If your child tests positive for COVID-19, we will still ensure they get the care and treatment they need. If you have any concerns about having the test, please contact your clinical team.

We have clear processes in place to immediately isolate anyone found to be positive, while continuing to deliver expert care and follow strict infection control guidelines. If you or your child have symptoms before you come to GOSH, please call your clinical team before you leave, for advice and support.

Staff who start to show symptoms while they are at work will immediately remove themselves from clinical areas for the safety of their patients.

For key hospital staff who have been isolating at home, we have a very clear process to decide

when and how it's safe for them to return to work. This goes above and beyond Government guidelines and is designed to make sure no-one returns to work unless they are fully recovered and not putting others at risk.

Q. How do I get my child's medicines?

A: To reduce the risks of COVID-19 infection, we need to restrict people coming to GOSH. This includes visiting to collect medication. We are making arrangements to post your child's medicines to your home via Royal Mail Special Delivery. We will contact you to discuss your child's specific needs and preferences.

We hope this helps to ensure your child's medicine supply is not affected in the current situation. As always, please make sure you have at least two weeks' supply of regular and long-term medicines. If you have moved home recently, please make sure that we have your current address and contact details. If you have any queries about your child's medicines, please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist, check the [Electronic Medicines Compendium website](#) or email Medicine.Information@gosh.nhs.uk.

You can also use the MyGOSH online portal to keep in touch with your child's clinical team, discuss their medicines, view test results, change appointments and more. Find out more and register at gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh.

If you are staying at GOSH and your child needs medicines to take home with them, we will collect these from the Pharmacy and bring them to you on the ward.

Q: Can we drive to GOSH? What about parking?

A: [Learn more about parking at GOSH here](#) or ask at main reception (open 24/7) when you arrive at the hospital.

Please note that Transport for London (TFL) has reinstated congestion charges and other road fees, effective from 18 May. See tfl.gov.uk for



more information. In specific circumstances, you may be able to be reimbursed for congestion charge payments – visit gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/travel-reimbursement to see if you're eligible.

Q: Some local cafés and shops are closed. How will we get food?

A: To make sure you have access to hot and cold food all day, our Lagoon restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

You'll find a selection of main meals to choose from, including Halal and vegetarian options. There are also lighter snacks, fresh fruit and delicious puddings.

You may find some shops open in the local area, which will be operating with social distancing measures in place. Many cafes and restaurants are open for takeaways only at the moment.

Q: Will the play team still be here to support my child during our appointment, procedure or admission?

A: Play is an essential part of the support provided to patients at GOSH, and the hospital's dedicated Play team will continue to work with patients at the hospital during this time, while following all the infection control guidelines that are in place. As part of this, we have taken the decision to close play areas, but have a variety of ways patients can still access play services.

The Play team have prepared activity packs including single use crafts, protected in sealed bags, for patients and their carer to use in their own room or bay. Play Specialist support for distraction is available as well as a range of sensory toys that are soothing.

If you have any questions about how to access the support of our Play team, please check the sign on the ward's play room door, speak to your ward's Play Specialist, or ask the Nurse in Charge. You can find online resources for families, including activities recommended by the

Play team, at gosh.nhs.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-information-hub/covid-19-resources-families.

Q: Is the GOSH school open?

A: The Children's Hospital School is open, with priority for teaching given to children and young people who are staying at GOSH for two weeks or longer. We have re-arranged our schoolroom so that we can deliver lessons safely.

If you and your child would like virtual support or educational advice, our teaching teams are here to help. Please contact the school as you normally would. You can find guidance and recommendations at gosh.nhs.uk/goshschool.

Q: Now that school is open for some year groups, should my child go back?

A: Read the latest information about schools reopening at gov.uk.

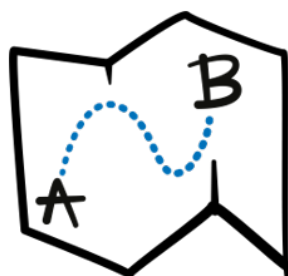
Alongside implementing new safety measures, like smaller class sizes, increased cleaning and timetable changes, schools will be asked to carefully consider the health and social needs of each student.

Important decisions about how your child accesses education during COVID-19 should be made jointly between you, the clinical team and your child's school. If you have questions or concerns about your child's schooling, we'd encourage you to discuss this with the clinical team and your child's school.

Q: What are you doing to protect GOSH staff?

A: Supporting our wonderful staff is a major priority for GOSH. We are carefully following updates in Public Health England (PHE) advice, including changes to PPE recommendations.

We want to make sure our staff feel safe, valued, looked after and able to ask for help if they need it. This has included offering support with things like accommodation near the hospital and on-site



food provision, as well as free services to support mental health and wellbeing.

You will see our staff wearing masks and other types of personal protective equipment (PPE)

around the hospital. All staff are following strict guidelines about when PPE should and should not be worn, based on the latest NHS guidance.

Further information and support

Information from the NHS at [nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)

Information for children is available on the BBC Newsround website at [bbc.co.uk/newsround](https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround)

Information from the RCPCH website at www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/covid-19-resources-parents-carers

Information from our specialty departments

You can find [guidance for specific patient groups here](#). These were put together by our specialist clinical teams and are being reviewed and added to regularly.

