Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children
NHS Foundation Trust

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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 (29th June 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 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. These symptoms have been compared to a separate condition called Kawasaki disease. We don't yet know for certain if this new inflammatory syndrome is directly linked to COVID-19.

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. You should follow this advice carefully, which may involve 'shielding'.

As we learn more about coronavirus, guidance is changing around who should take extra steps to protect themselves and what those steps should be. The Government has said restrictions for those shielding will be reduced from 6th July 2020, and that the shielding programme will be paused from 1st August 2020. These plans 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.

While the Government is still advising people to shield, you can also request support from the Government's National Shielding Programme, which is providing basic necessities, like food and care, to help individuals and families stay at home as much as possible. Register at www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable.

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. 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.

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. You can find more guidance at nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/.

If your child has been identified as being at high clinical risk from COVID-19, you can read special shielding advice from GOSH at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-and-vulnerable-children. This provides practical advice on what shielding might mean for your child and your family.

If you are an adult who has been identified as being at high clinical risk from COVID-19, you should follow the shielding guidance on the NHS 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?

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 only postponing procedures and appointments when we think it's safe to do so.

As we begin re-starting planned appointments and admissions in the coming weeks, your clinical team is working hard to prioritise those who need our care most urgently. 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.

- 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, only one carer per family will be allowed into the hospital and this should be the same carer each day. Unfortunately, siblings will not be able to visit the hospital.
- If your child is in intensive care, two carers will be allowed into the hospital, but only one should visit the bedside at a time. These should be the same two carers each day. Unfortunately, siblings will not be able to visit the hospital.

If your child is likely to be staying at GOSH for more than a week, you can nominate another carer to swap with you after seven days, to make sure you get some rest. Speak to your clinical team to find out how this would work and what the nominated carer needs to know.

We know there will be other circumstances where it's critical to have more than one carer. If you feel this is the case, please contact your child's clinical team to discuss your child's needs directly.

If your child is coming to GOSH for a planned admission, they may need to self-isolate before and after coming to the hospital, along with the parent or carer who will accompany them. If this is required, we will always contact you in advance of your visit to discuss any questions or worries you



may have. You can find everything you need to know before your admission 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, unless your child is in intensive care (see details above). 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. 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 you and your child for COVID-19, even if you do not have symptoms. The test involves collecting a bit of mucus from your nose and/or throat, using a small tube or cotton bud. It might be a little uncomfortable and make you 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, as well as offering a test to the parent or carer who accompanies them.

The test will involve collecting a bit of mucus from your nose and/or throat, using a small tube or cotton bud. It might be a little uncomfortable and make you cough or sneeze. You can 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 you or your child test positive for COVID-19, we will still ensure your child gets 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.

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) recently 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 Government recently started encouraging mainstream schools to re-open for certain year groups. There is separate advice for special schools, so we are carefully assessing what this means for the GOSH school as there are extra steps we need to take to protect patients, families and staff.

In the meantime, our teaching staff are continuing to support long stay patients with their learning remotely through virtual lessons and online resources. There is still no teaching in our schoolrooms or on wards until further notice. This includes GOSH and University College London Hospital.

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: Schools are already open to some children in priority groups. Read the latest information about which groups are being invited to return on 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. Children will be risk assessed to determine whether it's safe for them to return to the classroom. For those who are considered to be part of a clinically vulnerable group, for now it will be recommended that they are taught remotely.

Important decisions about how your child accesses education during COVID-19 should be made jointly between you and your child's school.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's schooling, we'd encourage you to contact their school directly.

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/

Information for children is available on the BBC Newsround website at 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.

