

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

**Dated: July 2022**

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 COVID-19.

Have a look at [Our new visiting guideline after COVID-19 | Great Ormond Street Hospital \(gosh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/our-new-visiting-guideline-after-covid-19) to find out about our visiting guidelines and how you can help to protect our vulnerable patients.

As we're regularly updating this guidance, if you'd like to share it please link directly to [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) – information for children, young people and families | Great Ormond Street Hospital \(gosh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-children-young-people-and-families), 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](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) for up-to-the-minute advice.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: What is coronavirus disease (COVID-19)?**

A: This is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It can cause a variety of symptoms, whilst most will be mild to moderate, some people may become seriously ill.

### **Q: What are the symptoms?**

A: The common symptoms are:

- Continuous cough
- High temperature, fever, or chills

- Loss of or change to your normal sense of smell or taste.
- Shortness of breath
- Unexplained tiredness, lack of energy
- Myalgia (muscle aches or pains that are not due to exercise)
- Not wanting to eat or not feeling hungry
- Headache that is unusual or longer lasting than usual
- Sore throat, stuffy or runny nose
- Diarrhoea, feeling sick or being sick

Read more about symptoms of COVID-19 at [nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/). However, these are similar to lots of other common illnesses.

If you have symptoms of Covid19, you should try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people until you no longer have any symptoms.

It is encouraged you test via lateral flow device (LFD or LFT) if you had contact of someone who tested positive or have symptoms of coronavirus. If you have a positive COVID-19 result, you may have COVID-19 even if you do not have symptoms. You can pass on the infection to others, even if you have no symptoms.

Use the NHS 111 service for urgent medical advice. 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 or have tested positive, please call their specialty team for advice and support before visiting the hospital.

### **Q: Does COVID-19 affect children?**

A: The evidence to date 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 [COVID-19: Specialty information sheets | Great Ormond Street Hospital \(gosh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-specialty-information-sheets) for patients, including those who may be considered immunocompromised or part of a vulnerable group.

**Q: What about new variants of COVID-19? Should I be worried about this?**

A: All viruses have the ability to 'mutate' or change over time, and the COVID-19 virus is no different. New variants of the COVID-19 virus are identified as part of the routine surveillance which is carried out by UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) (formerly Public Health England). It is normal for a virus to mutate to better adapt to infecting people, which is what this virus has done. It is more efficient at causing infection, which is what is meant when you hear talk of it being more transmissible or infectious. All viruses have the capability to adapt in this way, and this is something which was expected. It does not cause more severe disease, but it will infect more people.

However, we know that there are ways of reducing its spread, which is why we continue to encourage the use of hand sanitiser and the wearing of fluid-resistant face masks. Therefore, fluid-resistant face masks will be provided to you at the entrances and on request. Our staff will continue to wear fluid-resistant face masks in all clinical areas.

**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](https://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.

This inflammatory syndrome is affecting only a small number of children, but it's 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. Information about PIMS-TS is available at [www.gosh.nhs.uk/conditions-and-treatments/conditions-we-treat/paediatric-inflammatory-multisystem-syndrome-pims](https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/conditions-and-treatments/conditions-we-treat/paediatric-inflammatory-multisystem-syndrome-pims).

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

A: You can find guidance for specific patient groups at [COVID-19: Specialty information sheets | Great Ormond Street Hospital \(gosh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/information-sheets).

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 through the MyGOSH online portal. Find out more at [gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh](https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh).

Please also consult the latest NHS guidance at [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk).

**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](https://www.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](https://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.

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

A: 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 straight away.

**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](https://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, tested positive, or you think you may have come into close contact with someone affected, please call your child's specialty team for support before visiting the hospital.

We will continue to provide masks for you and your child, and we strongly encourage the wearing of masks, especially if your child is admitted to a bay. If your child is not able to wear a mask, 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.

- If your child has an outpatient appointment, two parents/carers will be allowed into the hospital, but we are asking that no siblings are brought in due to the size restriction of some areas.
- If your child is staying at GOSH overnight or longer, they will now be able to

receive visitors from extended family, siblings and friends as pre-covid pandemic.

- In some areas of the hospital including but not limited to the Mildred Creak Unit and Clinical Research Facility, visiting arrangements may differ and will be agreed at the time of your child's admission.
- Due to the size restrictions in some areas such as Theatre, either one or two parents/carers may accompany a child where possible we encourage that only one parent/carer attends. Please check with the relevant area before attending.
- If you feel it is critical for your child to be accompanied by additional carers, please contact your clinical team in advance of your child's appointment/admission to discuss your child's needs directly.

Before your child's appointment/ admission, we may ask you some questions regarding possible symptoms of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. While you are in the hospital, we will encourage you to wear a mask, and follow guidance regarding good hand hygiene. If you develop symptoms during your admission, please inform a member of staff immediately. If anyone in your household tests positive for COVID- 19 within 10 days of your child's admission, please contact your clinical team as soon as possible.

If your child is coming to GOSH for a planned admission, your clinical team will be able to provide information about the admission process.

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.

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

#### **Q: What should we expect when we arrive?**

A: When you visit GOSH, you may notice that 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.

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 guidance for COVID-19 infection control.

**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 all patients staying overnight, regardless of symptoms as well as all symptomatic patients including outpatients and day cases.

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. You can find out exactly what's involved at [gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19- testing](https://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.

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: Pharmacy is open, and you are welcome to come visit us to collect your prescriptions. If you are onsite for a hospital appointment and have a prescription with us, please do collect your prescription in person where you are able to. In line with government guidance, we previously restricted people coming into the hospital and made temporary arrangements to send medication out. Now that government restrictions have eased, we strongly recommend you collect prescriptions from the hospital where feasible. The routine posting of all medications will gradually be phased out. Going forward onsite teams will be reviewing the posting of medication on a case-by-case basis and if you require medications posting the parcels will still be sent via Royal Mail.

As always, please ensure you have at least four weeks' supply of regular and long-term medicines, ideally six weeks. If you have moved home recently, please make sure that we have your current address and contact details. If your child is on any regular medications that are only obtainable via GOSH and you are due for a clinic visit, OR you need a newly prescribed medication, please speak to your clinical team in the first instance. For new supplies please place requests a week in advance to allow your child's medications to be prepared in time for when you visit, so that you can pick up the medication from pharmacy after your appointment. Or alternatively, to discuss a supply against an existing prescription please contact pharmacy dispensary on 0207 829 8680.

If you have any queries about your child's medicines, please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist or Medicines Information via the Medications page on your MyGOSH app, or via telephone on 0207 829 8608 (available Monday- Friday, 9am – 5pm excluding bank holidays). Please note, this service does not currently manage requests for supply/repeat prescriptions.

**Q: Will you be offering the vaccine to children and young people?**

A: We aren't offering vaccines to children on site at GOSH as children who are eligible can either access them through the GP or mass vaccination sites.

[You can find out more about vaccinations for children on the NHS website.](#)

**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 all road charges.

See [tfl.gov.uk](https://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](https://gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/travel-reimbursement) to see if you're eligible.

**Q: Will the Play Team 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 is working with patients at the hospital, while following all the infection control guidelines that are in place.

As part of this, we have taken the decision to limit access to play areas to one patient at a time. We can then clean those areas and toys and help keep children, families and staff safe. We have a variety of ways patients can access play service such as prepared activity packs including single use crafts patients to use in their own room or bay.

Play Specialist support for distraction and other supportive play interventions are available via ward referral and we continue to have access to 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](https://gosh.nhs.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-information-hub/covid-19-resources-families).

**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 UKHSA 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 UKHSA guidance.

## Further information and support

Information from the NHS on the [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk).

Information for children is available on the [BBC Newsround website](https://www.bbc.com/news/health).

Information from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health on the [COVID-19 | RCPCH](https://www.rcpch.co.uk/covid-19)

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.

PDF copy of this page available below

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