



## COVID-19 UPDATE

19<sup>TH</sup> March 2021

### Vaccines

Following a rigorous scientific review of all the available data, MHRA has issued a statement saying, “the evidence does not suggest that blood clots in veins are caused by covid19 AstraZeneca vaccine”.

Please continue to have your vaccine when offered. The risk of developing clots with coronavirus are higher if you contract the virus.

You can find their statement here: <http://ow.ly/uWli50E2gdr>

### **Making Sense of the Government’s roadmap and what it means for people with thalassaemia and their families (shielding and non-shielding).**

Shielding advice is being paused in England and Wales (March 31<sup>st</sup>) and Scotland (April 26<sup>th</sup>).

Whilst people with thalassaemia are no longer advised to shield it is important to be extremely careful in following the advice on; limiting household/ social contacts, social distancing, hand washing and wearing a face covering in order to minimise risk of catching covid-19. It is important to note, even though the risk of catching covid-19 outdoors is lowered, it is still important that you follow the guidelines. **Please remember to get tested if you think you have symptoms of the coronavirus and contact your haematology teams if you require any medical information or support.**

Each of the devolved nations has its own approach to handling the COVID-19 crisis. Please find the specific details for people living in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland below.

### **England**

March 29<sup>th</sup>- Stay at home lifted in England to stay local. 2 households or up to 6 can meet outside. Outdoor sports will reopen. People should continue to work from home if they can, travel abroad prohibited.

April 12<sup>th</sup>- All non-essential retail opening

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021-summary>

### **Wales**

March 22<sup>nd</sup>- Garden centres, lifting all restrictions on what supermarkets can sell.

March 27<sup>th</sup>- End of stay local. Self-contained accommodation opens for those within Wales

April 2<sup>nd</sup>- Next review

April 12<sup>th</sup>- All retail open, close contact outdoor sports, schools open and a review of travel restrictions will take place.

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

## **Scotland**

April 2<sup>nd</sup>- Stay at home becomes stay local

April 5<sup>th</sup>- Contact sports for 12–17-year-olds is reopened.

April 12<sup>th</sup>- All children back in school fulltime

April 16<sup>th</sup>- Mainland moves to level 3, Travel within Scotland is allowed. All retail, libraries, museums, galleries, gyms, wedding limits raised to 50, hospitality outdoors until 10pm-

April 26<sup>th</sup>- Those who have been shielding can go back to college, work (if cannot work from home)

May 17<sup>th</sup>- Potentially All level 3 will move to level 2, indoor hospitality, adult outdoor contact sports, cinemas and in door events, more students back at university with a possibility of socialising in other homes- pending no rises in cases.

<https://www.mygov.scot/support-shielding/>

## **Northern Ireland**

March 22<sup>nd</sup>- Primary school years – P4 to P7

April 1<sup>st</sup>- up to 6 people (including children) from no more than two households can meet outdoors but maintain social distancing, up to 10 people from maximum of two households can take part in structured outdoor sports

April 12<sup>th</sup>- Secondary years -8-11, up to 15 people can take part in structured outdoor sports

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/covid-19-measures-2021-questions-and-answers>

## **General points- on employment, education etc.**

### **Work**

Everyone is currently advised to work from home where possible. If you cannot work from home, you should go to work. Your employer is required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace and should be able to explain to you the measures they have put in place to keep you safe at work. You may also want to consider how you get to and from work, for example, **if it is possible to avoid using public transport during rush hour.**

If you need support to work at home or in the workplace you can apply for **Access to Work** (<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>)

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (**furlough**) has been extended until 30 September (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>)

Once shielding ends, you will no longer be eligible for **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)** or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) on the basis of being advised to shield.

Separate Government guidance has been issued on how employers can make workplaces COVID-safe including how they can maintain social distancing and a system of risk management in your workplace (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>). The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has also published guidance on protecting vulnerable workers (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/protect-people.htm>), including advice for employers and employees on how to talk about reducing risks in the workplace (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/talking-to-your-workers/index.htm>).

If you have concerns you can also get advice on your specific situation and your employment rights by visiting the Acas website (<https://www.acas.org.uk/contact>) or calling the Acas helpline on 0300 123 1100.

## **School, college and other educational settings**

Clinically extremely vulnerable pupils and students should return to their school or other educational setting. Children who live in a household with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable are not advised to shield and should also return to school or college.

## **Socialising inside and outside the home**

Continue to maintain social distancing, wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face.

Continue to minimise the number of social interactions that you have. The fewer social interactions you have, the lower your risk of catching COVID-19.

When the rules allow you to meet with others from outside of your household, your risk of catching COVID-19 is lower if you meet them outdoors.

## **Going to shops and pharmacies**

While you are not advised to avoid going to the shops, you may wish to continue using online delivery for food and essential shopping, or to rely on family and friends. If you do go out to the shops or pharmacy, consider going at quieter times of the day. You must wear a face covering in all shops unless you are exempt.

Make sure you have already registered for priority access to supermarket delivery slots using the Shielding Support website or through your council as participating supermarkets will continue to offer priority access until 21 June. After this date individuals can continue to book deliveries from a supermarket.

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support>

## **Mental Health/ Wellbeing**

It is also important to look after your mental health. Go to the Every Mind Matters website (<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>) for advice and practical steps that you can take to support your wellbeing and manage your mental health during this pandemic and beyond. The Let's Talk Loneliness website also has a variety of tips, advice and further resources that you may find helpful (<https://letstalkloneliness.co.uk/>). If you or someone you care for experiences a mental health crisis, we urge you to make contact with a local health professional immediately (<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/>).

### **Lastly, remember:**

Continue to maintain social distancing, wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face.

Continue to minimise the number of social interactions that you have. The fewer social interactions you have, the lower your risk of catching COVID-19.

When the rules allow you to meet with others from outside of your household, your risk of catching COVID-19 is lower if you meet them outdoors.

When you are allowed to meet others indoors, keep the area well ventilated with fresh air, for example by opening the window. Please see the COVID-19: ventilation of indoor spaces guidance for more information (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-ventilation-of-indoor-spaces-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus>)

Try to reduce the amount of time you spend in settings where you are unable to maintain social distancing, or where other people's activities may reduce the likelihood of individuals maintaining social distancing.

You can find more information online about how to stop the spread of coronavirus (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus-covid-19/how-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus-covid-19>)