

COVID-19 Guidance for Carers

Supporting People from Vulnerable Groups

People who are identified as being part of vulnerable group population include; people with Learning Disabilities, people living with Dementia, people living with Mental Health Difficulties and people identified within the shielding category as extremely vulnerable.

Vulnerable groups are at greater risk of morbidity and mortality than the general population. These greater risks for people may lead to premature death. Within this population there is a higher risk of co-morbidities including respiratory conditions, with higher incidence of asthma, diabetes, obesity and heart disease. This evidence suggests that this vulnerable groups population may be significantly impacted by COVID-19.

The symptoms of Covid 19 are:

- A new, continuous cough or worsening of an existing cough and/or fever
- temperature higher than 37.8 or skin that feels hot to touch on the chest or back
- loss of smell or taste (anosmia)

Alongside this, other symptoms may be present:

- Breathlessness – normal number of breaths per minute is 12-20 – you may notice this because the person cannot speak in full sentences, struggles to eat or drink normally, is more distressed when lying down

- Fatigue or feeling very tired/having less energy – you may notice this because the person engages less, sleeps more, moves less
- Headaches – as with any pain you may notice changes in behaviour, agitation, rocking and other features well known to you when the person you care for is in pain
- Sore throat – may cause refusal to eat or drink, drinking more, massaging throat
- Aches and pains – you may notice this again because the person moves less or by changes in behaviour caused by pain and distress.
- Changes in skin appearance – if the person has a fever this may be clammy and hot or clammy and cold. The skin may be very pale or very flushed.
- Change in smell and taste – you may notice distaste for foods that were previously liked

Refer to individual pain or distress tools for example, the DISDAT and ABBEY Pain Scale: https://www.wamhinpc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Dis%20DAT_Tool.pdf

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/862/FOI-286f-13.pdf>

Identifying early signs of deterioration

It is important to have a record of what the person you are caring for is like when well- this is known as their **baseline reading**

[National Early Warning Score \(NEWS\)](#) is used by all health professionals to work out how unwell a person is.

Always make sure you have measured the below parameters when the person you look after is well so that you can see the difference in their current state using their **baseline reading**.

To use this tool you will need to be able to measure -

- Temperature – have a thermometer available
- Oxygen levels - consider buying oximeter

- Blood pressure - consider BP monitor

Purchasing equipment – there are various medical equipment suppliers available online but it may be difficult to access sites at present due to excess demand.

If you don't have any equipment then record

- Does skin feel hot, cold or normal – touch the back or chest
- Count the number of breaths taken per minute
- Check the pulse rate – number of beats per minute if you are able

Any change in mental state scores 3 on NEWS is a cause for alarm, therefore these changes need to be highlighted

Further information you will need to record

Try to always have SBARD available (see below) and use it to help you decide when to call **999**; this helps ensure that emergency services are able to process the information you give them appropriately and with the right level of response. https://www.swast.nhs.uk/assets/1/swasft_sbard_v3.pdf

Ensure you have easy access to the list of medicines the person is taking.

Ensure you know all the health problems the person has.

Does the person you care for, have a **hospital passport or health profile**?

If **yes** make sure it is up to date and relevant.

If **no** then support the person to complete one. <https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/health-guides> . https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/this_is_me_1553.pdf

What to do if you think the person you care for may have Covid 19

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

If possible, use the Covid 19 checker tool <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19->

If the person's symptoms are mild the tool will advise that the person stays at home.

The questions will help you to sort out if the person is too sick to stay at home. **CHECK REGULARLY FOR DETERIORATION**

If you don't have access to this then call 111.

Call **999** if you think the person is seriously ill.

Looking after someone who is likely to have COVID 19

Consider protection for yourself when you are providing personal care – by wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as disposable apron and gloves if possible and protect your face. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/877599/T2_Recommended_PPE_for_primary_outpatient_and_community_care_by_setting_poster.pdf

- Ensure the person has plenty to drink to prevent dehydration - urine must be a pale yellow colour
- Dehydration can cause constipation and therefore pain and behaviour change
- Dehydration can also make the person seem confused
- Use Paracetamol to manage the fever and aches and pains
- Plenty of rest though be aware if the person is becoming excessively drowsy.
- USE THE OBSERVATIONS LISTED ABOVE TO CHECK THE PERSON IS NOT GETTING WORSE
- If concerned call **999** if the person is breathless, excessively drowsy or **you are worried about deterioration/getting worse, having done a check**

Further guidance for home care providers <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-residential-care-supported-living-and-home-care-guidance/covid-19-guidance-on-home-care-provision>

Self-isolation

If you or the person you care for or anyone else in the household gets sick with possible Covid19, then you must isolate.

- The person who is sick must stay in the house for 7 days from the start of being unwell
- Everyone else in the household must stay at home for 14 days –
- If you catch the infection during those 14 days then you must stay at home for another minimum of 7 days
- You must aim to stay at least 2 metres away from other people in the house during this time. This may not be possible if you have to give direct care. Consider whether you should use any personal protection

<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-resources/easy-read-resources/>

Is the person that you care for at very high risk?

People falling into this extremely vulnerable should have received a letter from Welsh Government and include:

1. Solid organ transplant recipients.
2. People with specific cancers (see link below)
3. People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD.
4. People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell).
5. People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection.
6. Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.

For more information about the extremely vulnerable category please see the Welsh Government guidance here: <https://gov.wales/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-people-defined-on-medical-grounds-as-extremely-vulnerable-from-coronavirus-covid-19-html#section-38728>

Contacting GP

- There is little routine work happening in practices as most staff are managing the Covid 19 emergencies (routine work might be annual health checks, other routine checks for illnesses like diabetes)
- Don't go in person to the practice
- You must phone
- **If you are phoning on behalf of someone else, the GP should ask to speak directly with the person and assess their capacity. If that is not possible describe steps you have taken in relation to the person's capacity to give consent. Do you have a Lasting Power of Attorney, is there a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard in place (DOLS), does the person you care for have a Court of Protection Order in place**
- Make sure you state that the person you care for has a learning disability and/or complex health problems
- The person you care for may need to see a GP for another sort of problem – such as abdominal pain or problems linked to the person's other health issues
- Be prepared (and prepare the person you care for) for the fact that the doctor or nurse that you see may be wearing Personal Protective Equipment – mask, apron and gloves
- The person you care for may need supplies of repeat prescriptions

General Covid-19 advice

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

- Here's how to wash your hands <https://vimeo.com/134952598>
- Excellent guidance for carers <https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/looking-after-your-health/coronavirus-covid-19>

Charities that you normally work with are providing lots of information – look at their websites. <https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.ldw.org.uk/project/coronavirus/>

More general tips, advice and tools for supporting well-being at home can be found at <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/how-are-you-doing/>