

Guidance

# Coronavirus (COVID-19): Meeting with others safely (social distancing)

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This is guidance that applies to England only. If you live in an area where local restrictions are in place you should also consult the [local restrictions guidance](#), for information about what you can and can't do to manage the outbreak.

It is critical that everybody observes the following key behaviours:

- **HANDS** - Wash your hands regularly and for 20 seconds.
- **FACE** - Wear a face covering in indoor settings where social distancing may be difficult, and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet.
- **SPACE** - Stay 2 metres apart from people you do not live with where possible, or 1 metre with extra precautions in place (such as wearing face coverings or increasing ventilation indoors).

## 1. Social distancing

To reduce the risk of catching or spreading coronavirus, try to keep at least 2 metres away from people you do not live with. Social distancing is essential to stop the spread of the virus, as it is more likely to spread when people are close together. An infected person can pass on the virus even if they do not have any symptoms, through talking, breathing, coughing or sneezing.

When with people you do not live with, you should also avoid: physical contact; being close and face-to-face; and shouting or singing close to them. You should also avoid crowded areas with lots of people; and touching things that other people have touched.

Where you cannot stay 2 metres apart you should stay more than 1 metre apart, as well as taking extra steps to stay safe. For example:

- [wear a face covering](#): on public transport and in many indoor spaces, you must wear a face covering by law, unless you are exempt
- move outdoors, where it is safer and there is more space
- if indoors, make sure rooms are well ventilated by keeping windows and doors open

You do not need to socially distance from anyone in your household, meaning the people you live with. You also do not need to socially distance from someone you're in an established relationship with, or anyone in your legally-permitted [support bubble](#) if you are in one. It may not always be possible or practicable to maintain social distancing when providing care to a young child, or person with a disability or health condition. You should still limit close contact as much as possible when providing these types of care, and take other precautions such as washing hands and opening windows for ventilation.

## 2. Seeing friends and family

When seeing friends and family you do not live with you should:

- follow social distancing rules
- limit how many different people you see socially over a short period of time
- meet people outdoors where practical: meeting people outdoors is safer than meeting people indoors because fresh air provides better ventilation

Limits on the number of people you can see socially are changing. From Monday 14 September, when meeting friends and family you do not live with you must not meet in a group of more than 6, indoors or outdoors.

From 14 September - when the new rules apply - it will be against the law to meet people you do not live with in a group larger than 6 (unless you are meeting as a household or support bubble). The police will have the powers to enforce these legal limits, including to issue fines (fixed penalty notice) of £100, doubling for further breaches up to a maximum of £3,200.

There will be exceptions where groups can be larger than 6 people, including:

- where everyone lives together or is in the same support bubble, or to continue existing arrangements where children do not live in the same household as both their parents
- for work, and voluntary or charitable services
- for education, training, registered childcare, or [providers offering before or after-school clubs](#) for children
- fulfilling legal obligations such as attending court or jury service
- providing emergency assistance, or providing support to a vulnerable person
- for you or someone else to avoid illness, injury or harm
- participate in children's playgroups
- wedding and civil partnership ceremonies and receptions, or for other religious life-cycle ceremonies - where up to 30 people will be able to attend
- funerals - where up to 30 people will be able to attend
- organised indoor and outdoor sports, physical activity and exercise classes (see the list of [recreational team sports](#), [outdoor sport](#) and exercise allowed under the [gyms and leisure centre guidance](#))
- youth groups or activities
- elite sporting competition or training
- protests and political activities organised in compliance with COVID-19 secure guidance and subject to strict risk assessments

More information can be found on our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page.

## 3. Rules in other venues and activities

Venues following [COVID-19 secure guidelines](#) will be able to continue to host more people in total - such as religious services in places of worship - but no one should visit in a group of greater than 6. When you visit one of these places, such as a pub, shop, leisure venue, restaurant or place of worship you should:

- follow the limits on the number of other people you should meet with as a group - no more than six people unless you all live together (or are in the same support bubble)
- avoid social interaction with anyone outside the group you are with, even if you see other people you know
- provide your contact details to the organiser so that you can be contacted if needed by the [NHS Test and Trace programme](#)

Is this page useful?  Yes  No

[Is there anything wrong with this page?](#)

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