

Coronavirus: What are social distancing and self-isolation? 18 March 2020 BBC News

Everybody in the UK has been asked to stop non-essential contact with other people and avoid all unnecessary travel. This is known as social distancing.

It follows people with flu-like symptoms being asked to self-isolate at home, to avoid infecting others.

So, what do you need to know about social distancing and self-isolation?

What is social distancing?

Social distancing means trying to avoid contact with other people.

It means spending less time in public places, where a lot of people are around.

The government wants:

- People to start working from home wherever possible
- All unnecessary travel stopped
- Pubs, clubs, theatres and other such social venues to be avoided
- Anyone living with someone who has a cough or a temperature to stay at home for 14 days



Within days, it expects to announce measures for people in at-risk groups to stay at home for 12 weeks. This affects pregnant women, people aged over 70 and those with underlying health conditions.

What is self-isolating?

Self-isolating means cutting yourself off from the rest of the world.

From now on, if one person in a household starts to display flu-like symptoms - defined as a fever of above 37.8C or a persistent cough - everyone living there must stay at home for 14 days.

Public Health England (PHE) currently says that, if possible, you should not go out even to buy food or other essentials, other than to take exercise, and in that case at a safe distance from others.

What happens if you have a vulnerable person living with you?

You should keep at least 2m (6ft) back from a vulnerable person during any period of isolation, **according to PHE**.

The time spent in shared spaces, like kitchens, should be minimised and all rooms should be well-ventilated. Avoid using these rooms at the same time as a vulnerable person. If they can, they should take their meals back to their room to eat.

A vulnerable person should also use separate towels from the rest of the household. If possible, they should use a separate bathroom. If that is not possible, the bathroom should be cleaned every time it's used (for example, wiping surfaces with which you have come into contact).

People living with someone in isolation should **wash their hands often**, using soap and water for at least 20 seconds - especially after coming into contact with them.

Personal waste (like tissues) should be double-bagged and put aside for 72 hours before being put in your outside bin.