

Living safely with COVID-19 in the workplace

Some workers are at a greater risk of serious illness from COVID-19, for example people who have a weakened immune system. There is specific [guidance for people whose immune system means that they are at higher risk](#), because they have a reduced ability to fight infections, such as COVID-19. Employers may wish to consider the needs of employees at greater risk from COVID-19, including those whose immune system means they are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

This tool has been developed by Bath and North East Somerset Council using national government guidance and information provided by the National Health Service. It is intended as a tool that employers may wish to use to help support members of staff who are at higher risk of developing serious illness when infected with COVID-19. The tool offers practical actions that employers and staff can take to reduce this risk.

Please be aware there is no requirement under Health and Safety legislation for employers to undertake a specific COVID-19 workplace risk assessment **unless** staff are actively working with the virus (e.g. research laboratory) or in a setting where they may become exposed (e.g. health and social care who are caring for and/or treating infectious patients). In the circumstances listed, employers are required under COSHH, to ensure that suitable control measures are in place – more information can be found on the [HSE website](#).

How to use this tool

This tool should be used and filled out by the employer and staff together and any actions taken should be collaborative and mutually agreed. The tool asks several questions about the member of staff that are designed to identify whether they are at higher risk of developing serious illness from COVID-19. It asks questions about the staff's age, gender, ethnicity, health, household and vaccination status as all these factors may increase their own or other's risk of severe illness. Please be aware that your staff member may want or need to consult their GP about the health conditions listed. To use this tool, please work through the following three steps:

- 1. Check your risk:** Complete the questions on page 2 and add up your employee's score in the far-right column.
- 2. Understand your risk:** Using the score and considering any other factors which may put your employee's wellbeing at risk, identify your employee's level of risk to developing serious illness from COVID-19 using the grid on pages 3-7. Please be aware the levels of risk are separated into 3 broad pragmatic groups and the employer is encouraged to consider additional risks which may be unique to the employee or workplace such as the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace and any mental health concerns.
- 3. Identify actions:** Using the grid on pages 3-7 and communicating with your employee, identify a set of mutually agreed actions (page 8) that can be taken to manage the employee's risk to being infected with COVID-19 in the workplace. Please be aware the recommendations are subject to change. To read the most up-to-date coronavirus guidance, please follow [current coronavirus guidance](#).

Risk Factor	Score	✓ / X
Age – the risk of mortality or being hospitalised due to COVID-19 is greater for those who are older		
Are you 50-59 years old?	1	
Are you 60-69 years old?	2	
Are you 70 years old or over?	4	
Sex at birth – the risk of mortality or being hospitalised due to COVID-19 is greater for those who are male		
Are you male?	1	
Ethnicity – COVID-19 may have a bigger impact on some ethnic groups		
Do you identify as one of the BAME or mixed-race groups listed below*?	1	
Existing health conditions – the risk of mortality or being hospitalised due to COVID-19 is greater for those who have a pre-existing health condition		
Are you at higher risk to getting severely ill from COVID-19? Visit the NHS website if you're unsure or see appendix A on pages 9-12.	4	
Other people in your household – those living or caring for someone who is at higher risk to getting severely ill from COVID-19 should consider taking extra precautions.		
Are you living with someone who is at higher risk to getting severely ill from COVID-19 (this includes people over 70 and pregnant women)? Visit the NHS website if you're unsure or see Appendix A on pages 9-12.	1	
COVID-19 vaccination - the risk of mortality or being hospitalised due to COVID-19 is greater for those who have not been vaccinated		
If you have not received any dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, please tick this box.	3	
If you have received your first dose more than 22 days ago but not your second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, please tick this box.	2	
If you've received both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine but not your booster, please tick this box.	1	
Total score		

*Mixed\Multiple ethnic groups (White and Black Caribbean; White and Asian; White and Black African; Other Mixed), Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Black African, Black Caribbean, other ethnic group (Asian other; Black other; Arab; other ethnic group). N.B. People with Chinese origin are not at increased risk according to the latest [ONS report](#).

Total score		
<p>Lower risk 0-2</p> <p>Continue to work following all recommended COVID-19 secure practices. See Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and Living safely with respiratory infections, including covid-19. In summary, these measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get vaccinated. Vaccines are the best defence we have against COVID-19. They provide good protection against hospitalisation and death. They also reduce the risk of long-term symptoms. The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective and vaccine programmes are continuously monitored. If you are eligible and you have not yet received your full course of a COVID-19 vaccine, you should get vaccinated. To find out more about the vaccinations available to you and when you should have them, visit the NHS website. • Ventilate the workspace by opening doors and windows and/or using mechanical ventilation (including air conditioning) and filtration units. The more fresh air that is brought inside, the quicker any viruses will be removed from the room. Meeting outdoors greatly reduces this risk, but this may not always be possible. Visit GOV.UK for more information. 	<p>Medium risk 3-5</p> <p>As per the recommendations for “lower risk” with the following additions:</p> <p>Continue to work following all recommended COVID-19 secure practices.</p> <p>Examples of additional precautions that can be taken in the workplace include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wearing a face covering or face mask (see section 1) • Heightening ventilation measures (see section 2) • Heightening hand and surface hygiene measures (see section 3) • Limiting contact between employees who are at higher risk of becoming severely unwell if they are infected with COVID-19 and employees who (see section 4): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ feel unwell <i>and/or</i> ○ have lived with or stayed overnight with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 10 days <p><u>Section 1. Wearing a face covering</u></p> <p>Face coverings protect the wearer and others against the spread of infection because they cover the nose and mouth, which are the main</p>	<p>Higher risk 6 or more</p> <p>As per the recommendations for “lower” and “medium” risk with the following additions:</p> <p>Continue to work following all recommended COVID-19 secure practices.</p> <p>The employee and employer should work together to identify a set of mutually agreed actions that can be taken to minimise the employee’s risk.</p> <p>Examples of adjustments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider whether public transport/rush hour can be avoided through adjustments to work hours. • Consider moving staff to an area with reduced contact with members of the public and/or other staff. • Avoiding any tasks or roles where people come into close contact for extended periods of time. • Ensuring the workspace is well ventilated by seating ‘higher risk’ individuals near to windows and doors and/or using mechanical ventilation (including air conditioning) and/or filtration units.

- **Good hygiene.** Ensure frequent hand and surface hygiene and cover any coughs and sneezes. More information can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).
- **Consider wearing a face covering or a face mask.** Wearing a face covering or face mask can reduce the number of particles containing viruses that are released from the mouth and nose of someone who is infected with COVID-19 and other respiratory infections. Face coverings can also protect the person wearing the face covering from becoming infected by some viruses. Consider wearing a face covering when:
 - you are coming into close contact with someone at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell from COVID-19 or other respiratory infections
 - COVID-19 rates are high and you will be in close contact with other people, such as in crowded and enclosed spaces
 - there are a lot of respiratory viruses circulating, such as in winter, and you will be in close contact with other people in crowded and enclosed spaces
 - For more information visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

confirmed sources of transmission of virus that causes COVID-19 infection.

You should consider wearing a face covering when:

- you are coming into close contact with someone at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell from COVID-19 or other respiratory infections
- COVID-19 rates are high and you will be in close contact with other people, such as in crowded and enclosed spaces
- there are a lot of respiratory viruses circulating, such as in winter, and you will be in close contact with other people in crowded and enclosed spaces

Employers should be aware that staff may choose to wear a face covering in the workplace even if not required, and should be supported to do so, particularly if the staff member is at higher risk to getting severely ill from COVID-19.

Please be aware face coverings are not a replacement for the other ways of managing risk, including minimising time spent in contact, using fixed teams and partnering for close-up

- Limiting contact between employees who are at higher risk of becoming severely unwell if they are infected with COVID-19 and employees who:
 - feel unwell *and/or*
 - have lived with or stayed overnight with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 10 days

If you have concerns about your health and safety at work then you can raise them with your workplace union, HSE or your local authority.

Specific guidance for people previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Specific guidance for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk to COVID-19 can also be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

work, and increasing hand and surface washing. Employers and employees should not rely on face coverings alone to mitigate risk.

Employers should support their workers in using face coverings safely if they choose to wear one. This means telling workers:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and after removing it.
- When wearing a face covering, avoid touching your face or face covering, as you could contaminate them with germs from your hands.
- Change your face covering if it becomes damp or if you've touched it.
- Change and wash your face covering daily.
- If the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer's instructions. If it's not washable, dispose of it carefully in your usual waste.

Please be mindful that the wearing of a face covering may inhibit communication with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound.

Section 2. Ventilating the workspace

Extra care should be taken to ensure individuals in this category are able to work in a well-ventilated area.

Good ventilation can be different for areas depending on how many people are in there, how the space is being used, and the layout of the area. Therefore, you will need to consider the ventilation requirements in the area you are considering.

Some examples of increasing ventilation in the workplace include opening doors and windows, mechanical ventilation (including air conditioning) and filtration units.

For more information on ventilation, please visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Section 3. Heightening hand and surface hygiene measures

Following these basic rules of good hygiene will help to protect you and others from COVID-19 as well as many other common infections:

- cover your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze
- wash your hands
- clean your surroundings

For more information, please visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Section 4. Mitigating risk of transmission

Employees with symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as COVID-19, and who have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work or carry out normal activities, should try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people, until they no longer have a high temperature (if you had one) or until they no longer feel unwell. It is particularly important to avoid close contact with anyone who is at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell if they are infected with COVID-19 and other respiratory infections, especially those whose immune system means that they are at higher risk of serious illness, despite vaccination.

Employees who are a household or overnight contact of someone who has had a positive COVID-19 test result should avoid contact with people who are at higher risk of becoming severely unwell if they are infected with COVID-19, especially those whose immune system means they are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19, despite vaccination.

If you are unsure of any of the information provided in this document, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> or email B&NES Council Public Health public_health@bathnes.gov.uk.

Following your discussions with your employee, record the agreed plan and ensure you set a time for review.

What reasonable adjustments have been identified and taken to mitigate your employee's identified risks?

.....
.....
.....

Signed and date (employer/manager)

.....

Signed and date (employee)

.....

Date adjustments were introduced

.....

Date for review (This may be time based or instigated by an event that impacts on your circumstances)

.....

Appendix A

Who is at high risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) can make anyone seriously ill. But for some people, the risk is higher.

People who are eligible for COVID-19 treatments

The NHS is offering antibody and antiviral treatments to people with COVID-19 who are at highest risk of becoming seriously ill.

You may be at highest risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19 if you have:

- Down's syndrome
- sickle cell disease
- HIV or AIDS
- chronic kidney disease (CKD) stage 4 or 5
- certain types of cancer
- had certain types of chemotherapy in the last 12 months
- had radiotherapy in the last 6 months
- had an organ transplant
- a severe liver condition (such as cirrhosis)
- a rare condition affecting the brain or nerves (multiple sclerosis, motor neurone disease, Huntington's disease or myasthenia gravis)
- certain autoimmune or inflammatory conditions (such as rheumatoid arthritis or inflammatory bowel disease)

- a condition or treatment that makes you more likely to get infections
- A doctor or specialist will confirm if you are eligible for treatment.

[Find out more about treatments for COVID-19](#)

People who have a severely weakened immune system

A 3rd dose and booster (4th dose) of the COVID-19 vaccine is being offered to people aged 12 and over who had a severely weakened immune system when they had their first 2 doses.

This includes people who had or have:

- a blood cancer (such as leukaemia or lymphoma)
- a weakened immune system due to a treatment (such as steroid medicine, biological therapy, chemotherapy or radiotherapy)
- an organ or bone marrow transplant
- a condition that means you have a very high risk of getting infections
- a condition or treatment your specialist advises makes you eligible for a 3rd dose

[Find out more about the COVID-19 vaccine for people with a severely weakened immune system](#)

Children and young people at high risk

Some children and young people aged 5 to 17 are considered at high risk from COVID-19 if either:

- they live with someone who has a weakened immune system (such as someone who has HIV, has had a transplant or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis)
- they have a condition that means they're at high risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19

Conditions that mean they may be at high risk include:

- a severe problem with the brain or nerves, such as cerebral palsy
- Down's syndrome
- severe or multiple learning disabilities (or they're on the learning disability register)
- a condition that means they're more likely to get infections (such as some genetic conditions or types of cancer)

All children and young people who are at high risk can get a 1st and 2nd dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Children and young people aged 12 to 17 can also get booster dose.

More information

- [GOV.UK: COVID-19 vaccination for children aged 5 to 11 at high risk](#)
- [GOV.UK: COVID-19 vaccination for children aged 12 to 17](#)

People who have a condition that puts them at high risk

People aged 16 and over with a health condition that puts them at high risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19 are eligible for a booster dose of the vaccine.

These conditions include:

- long-term lung conditions (such as severe asthma, COPD, bronchiectasis and cystic fibrosis)
- long-term conditions affecting the heart or blood vessels (such as congenital heart disease, heart failure and peripheral arterial disease)
- long-term kidney disease
- long-term liver conditions (such as cirrhosis and hepatitis)
- conditions affecting the brain or nerves (such as dementia, Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, cerebral palsy or stroke)
- severe or multiple learning disabilities

- Down's syndrome
- diabetes
- problems with the spleen or the spleen has been removed (splenectomy)
- severe obesity (a BMI of 40 or above)
- severe mental conditions (such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder)
- a condition or treatment that makes you more likely to get infections
- a condition your doctor advises puts you at high risk

[Find out more about the COVID-19 vaccine booster dose](#)

Advice if you're at high risk

People at high risk from COVID-19 are advised to follow the same guidance as everyone else.

You are no longer advised to stay at home (shield). But there are still things you can do to help keep yourself safe.

[Read more about advice for people at high risk from COVID-19](#)

Important: Clinically extremely vulnerable

People are no longer being called clinically extremely vulnerable.

Some people who were previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable are still considered at high risk from COVID-19.

[Read the guidance for people previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable on GOV.UK](#)

The information above was taken from <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/who-is-at-high-risk-from-coronavirus/> on 26 April 2022