

Autistic People and Coronavirus (also called Covid-19)

Summary:

Coronavirus is a new illness – also called Covid-19. A lot of people will catch it over the next few months but nearly everyone will get better. People aged over 70 or people who are already very unwell (with cancer for example) may be seriously ill if they catch the virus. The NHS will send everyone they think is at risk of being seriously ill with coronavirus a letter from the NHS over the next few weeks.

We need to help make sure the virus does not spread, especially to these people, so the latest advice from the Government (March 2020) is to stay at home as much as you can. This is because germs can spread easily between people without you knowing.

You can leave the house to:

- ✓ Buy food
- ✓ Exercise once a day on your own or with people you live in close contact with
- ✓ Go for any medical appointments
- ✓ Go out to help a vulnerable person (for example buying them food)

If you are out doing these things, make sure you stay 2m/6ft away from other people.

When you get back home, wash your hands with soap for 20 seconds

- ✗ We should not meet friends or family who we do not live with

If you are feeling really hot and unwell, or have a new bad cough, you'll need to stay at home for at least 7 days.

Drink lots of fluids and try to sleep a lot so your body gets better quicker.

Do not go to the doctors, as that spreads the germs to other people in their surgery.

Ask for help if you are not feeling well enough to cope. Here are some ideas:

There is help and advice online at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> if you have a way to use the internet. Or search online using the words **NHS Covid**. The top thing it finds should be the information page, which is kept up to date.

Family, friends or carers may be able to help you also.

What is it?

Coronavirus is a new illness. It can make some people feel very hot (fever) and give them a very bad cough. Most people don't get very ill. People who are old, or already not well, might get very ill. We need to help them to stay well.



Coronavirus spreads when its germs get from one person to someone else. They are too small to see.

The spray from someone's cough can have the germs in it. The germs may reach the other person if they stand close to the person who is coughing.



The germs from coughing might land on a door handle or other surface. If people put their hand on that, then put their hand to their mouth, eyes or nose, the germs can get into their body.



So, we need to think about staying as safe as we can from the germs.



Wash your hands with soap and water. Make sure you wash all over both your hands, and carefully wash all fingers and thumbs.

Do this every time you go to the loo, and before eating something. The germs on hands die after about 20 seconds in soap, so this really helps. Counting slowly to 20 when washing hands may work. Or find a song to sing that lasts about 20 seconds. The picture below shows one good way to make sure hands are clean.

If the soap is too smelly, there may be soaps that don't smell so much.

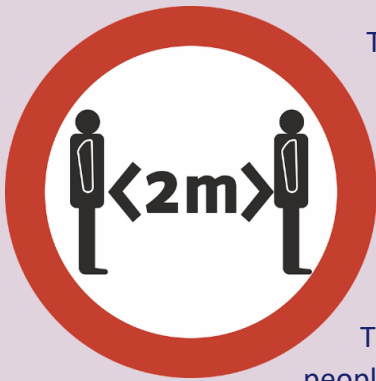
If your hands get dry and uncomfortable from washing more often, there are hand creams that can help. Some aren't smelly.

If we can't use soap and water, we can use hand gel that kills germs. Some shops and homes have some of this.

If you cough or sneeze, cough or sneeze into a tissue or into your sleeve.

Put tissue straight into a bin after you cough or sneeze into it.

Wash your hands afterwards.



Try not to be near other people who are not well. Try to be about 6 feet (2 metres) away from other people. Don't shake hands or hug others. If it's people we love, like our family, this might be difficult, of course.

The Government asks that we all stop meeting with lots of others. For example, restaurants, theatres, cafes and cinemas. This helps stop the germs moving from one person to lots of other people.

If you feel very hot and not well, or if you have a new bad cough, try to stay away from others.

If you are feeling really hot and unwell, or have a new bad cough, you'll need to stay at home for at least 7 days. Do not go straight to the doctors, as that spreads the germs to other people in their surgery.

Ask for help if you are not feeling well enough to cope. Here are some ideas:

There is help and advice online at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> if you have a way to use the internet. Or search online using the words **NHS Covid**. The top thing it finds should be the information page.

Please be mindful that this advice is being updated regularly so check the Government website for updates and latest advice.

Family, friends or carers may be able to help you also.

How Do I Cope with all the Changes?

Some things may be different for weeks or months.

Some people you like and trust may not be well. They may need to go home and get better, so there may be new people.

If you like going to groups to do things, those group may have to stop for a while. This helps to stop the germs from moving to lots of new people. We don't know how long they will stop, yet.

So, you may need to do some hobbies or work alone or with just one or two other people who feel OK.

Lots of people feel upset or worried, or maybe angry. It is very normal to feel this way when things change.

Find a way to say how you feel to someone you trust. Maybe write it down, or use pictures and art.

Find favourite things to do.

Be kind to yourself, if you can.

If you are looking after other people, teach them the things in this information paper so they stay safe too.



How do I support an autistic person now?

Just the same as normal:

- Be kind
- Be clear
- Be reassuring but be accurate. It's OK to say we don't know an answer yet.

They may be extra tired, from worry and extra sensory load.

Watch carefully for signs of illness. Some autistic people don't get great feedback from their bodies to tell us we're ill, so the first sign might be different behaviour or mood.

Plan with them, allowing as much as possible of their hobbies and interests. Keep to familiar routines wherever you can.

Try to find hand wash items and hand creams that are not smelly (unless it is a smell they love).

Make sure they have any sensory needs sorted out, e.g. really comfy clothing and footwear, the right lighting and sound levels, access to sunglasses or noise cancelling headphones maybe.

Some may ask repeated questions about the new situations. This is very understandable. It's an anxious time for everyone, autistic or not. It may be useful to have this kind of information in writing or pictures so they can check it when needed.

Be kind to yourself too. This is new for all of us, and we're all doing our best together.

