

You have accepted additional cookies. You can [change your cookie settings \(/help/cookies\)](#) at any time.

[Hide this message](#)



Coronavirus (COVID-19) (/coronavirus)

Latest updates and guidance

1. [Home \(https://www.gov.uk/\)](https://www.gov.uk/)
2. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) \(https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-taxon\)](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-taxon)

Guidance

COVID-19: guidance for the safe use of places of worship

Guidance for people attending a place of worship and those who are responsible for these venues.

From:

[Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities \(/government/organisations/department-for-levelling-up-housing-and-communities\)](#) and [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government \(/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government\)](#)

Published

16 July 2021

Last updated

10 December 2021 —

Applies to England

Contents

- [Summary](#)
- [Introduction](#)
- [Keeping yourself and others safe](#)
- [Face coverings](#)
- [Steps everyone can take to reduce the risk of transmission](#)
- [Social distancing and capacity](#)
- [Let fresh air in](#)
- [Testing](#)
- [Protecting the vulnerable](#)

- [Handling objects and communal resources](#)
- [Singing, music, and performances](#)
- [Venues](#)
- [Food and drink](#)
- [NHS COVID Pass](#)
- [Using the NHS COVID-19 app](#)
- [Collection of Contact Details](#)
- [Other guidance](#)
- [Annex A: Template form for collecting consent and contact details for attendees at places of worship](#)

This guidance is only applicable in England. For guidance in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, please refer to guidance from the relevant national governments.

Summary

The government has announced that England will move to Plan B in response to the risks of the Omicron variant. [Find out what you must do to help prevent the spread](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do>).

- Face coverings are required by law in most indoor settings.
- From 13 December office workers who can work from home should do so.
- From 15 December, certain venues and events will be required by law to check that all visitors aged 18 years or over are fully vaccinated, have proof of a negative test in the last 48 hours, or have an exemption.

What this means for places of worship

- The NHS COVID Pass is mandatory for entry into venues where large crowds gather. This requirement will not apply to places of worship when they are being used for communal worship, weddings, funerals and other ceremonies to mark key life events.
- Receptions which take place after such events, such as Wedding receptions, will need to comply with the new requirement where they meet the attendee thresholds set out in guidance, and they are organised by a business, a charitable, benevolent, or philanthropic institution or a public body (and not an individual).
- The legal requirement to wear face coverings in most public indoor venues will be extended to places of worship and some other public spaces. Some people, including people with disabilities, are exempt from having to wear face coverings in any setting.
- There are exemptions for those leading a service or giving a reading. It will also be a reasonable excuse if those who wish to sing during a service decide that if they need to remove their face coverings in order to do so.

Introduction

This guidance is for:

- members of the public who may be attending a place of worship

- members of the public or professionals who may be responsible for places of worship
- professionals who work at places of worship

Keeping yourself and others safe

It is important that we all use personal judgement to manage our own risk. All of us can play our part by exercising common sense and considering the risks.

Face coverings

Face coverings are required by law in most indoor public places, including our places of worship, and on public transport.

There are some exemptions. Face coverings will not be required in hospitality settings such as cafes, restaurants and pubs. This is because it is not practical for customers to keep removing their face coverings to eat or drink. This means that in a café within a place of worship, face coverings are not required, but they are mandatory in the rest of the premises.

Where a premises or part of a premises is being used for an event where the main activities include eating, drinking and dancing, face coverings are not required. Face coverings must be worn in communal areas of the premises not being used for the event, such as in a lobby when an event is taking place in a conference room.

In indoor settings where a face covering is not legally required, you should still continue to wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you may come into contact with other people you do not normally meet.

Some people, including people with disabilities, are exempt from having to wear face coverings in any setting. They do not routinely need to show any written evidence of this, and do not need to show an exemption card (though they may choose to do so).

More information, including the full list of settings where face coverings are required or not, can be found here: [Face coverings: when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make your own](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>).

Steps everyone can take to reduce the risk of transmission

- Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, even if they are mild, should not attend. They should self-isolate immediately and [get a PCR test](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/get-tested-for-coronavirus/) (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/get-tested-for-coronavirus/>).
- You must also self-isolate if you are told to do so by NHS Test and Trace. Find out:
 - [what you should do if you live in the same household as someone who has tested positive](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>)
 - [what you should do if you've come into contact with someone outside your household who has tested positive](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person>)

- Social distancing in a place of worship is now a personal choice. People are encouraged to respect other attendees and those working who may wish to adopt a more cautious approach.
- The NHS COVID-19 app is a vital part of NHS Test and Trace in England and Wales. Using the app helps stop the spread of the virus by informing you that you have been in close contact with someone who has since tested positive for coronavirus, even if you don't know each other.
- Several simple and effective personal hygiene behaviours can also continue to reduce the risk of catching or spreading COVID-19. These include:
 - washing your hands with soap and water or using hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day
 - avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and washing your hands before and after if you do need to touch your face (for example to put on or take off your face covering)
 - covering your mouth and nose with disposable tissues when you cough or sneeze, or sneezing into the crook of your elbow (not your hands) if you do not have a tissue

Please refer to the guidance on [how to stay safe and stop the spread of coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do#keeping-yourself-and-others-safe) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do#keeping-yourself-and-others-safe>) for further information and the actions to take to reduce the chance of spreading COVID-19.

Social distancing and capacity

You do not need to implement social distancing (2 metres or 1 metre plus with mitigations).

However, you may choose to limit the close contact you have with people you do not usually live with. You may also choose to take a free test before being in close contact to help manage periods of risk. These are personal choices which can help reduce your risk of catching or spreading COVID-19.

It is important to consider that others may wish to take a more cautious approach. We should all be considerate of this, and provide the opportunity and space for others to reduce close contacts if they wish.

Please refer to the guidance on [how to stay safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/coronavirus-how-to-stay-safe-and-help-prevent-the-spread) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/coronavirus-how-to-stay-safe-and-help-prevent-the-spread>) for further information and the actions to take to reduce the chance of spreading COVID-19.

Let fresh air in

When worship takes place inside or in other enclosed spaces, consider how the space can be continually well ventilated, before, during and after.

Letting fresh air into indoor spaces is important because when a person infected with COVID-19 coughs, talks or breathes, they release droplets and aerosols which can be inhaled by other people. The more fresh air there is to breathe, the less likely other people are to inhale infectious

particles. [There is further guidance on ventilation of indoor spaces to stop the spread of COVID-19 \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-ventilation-of-indoor-spaces-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus/ventilation-of-indoor-spaces-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus-covid-19\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-ventilation-of-indoor-spaces-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus/ventilation-of-indoor-spaces-to-stop-the-spread-of-coronavirus-covid-19).

Testing

Around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have any symptoms. This means they could be spreading the virus without knowing it.

Rapid lateral flow testing is available for free to anybody, but is particularly focused on those who are not fully vaccinated, those in education, and those in higher-risk settings such as the NHS, social care and prisons. People may also wish to use regular rapid testing to help manage periods of risk such as returning to the workplace, close contact in a higher risk environment or when spending prolonged time with a more vulnerable individual. You can get tests from pharmacies or online. [Find out more about how to get rapid lateral flow tests \(https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/regular-rapid-coronavirus-tests-if-you-do-not-have-symptoms/\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/regular-rapid-coronavirus-tests-if-you-do-not-have-symptoms/).

The [NHS Covid Pass \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/demonstrating-your-covid-19-status\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/demonstrating-your-covid-19-status) allows you to check your Covid status and demonstrate that you are at lower risk of transmitting to others, through full vaccination or a recent negative test.

If you develop [COVID-19 symptoms \(https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/), self-isolate immediately and [get a PCR test \(https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/get-tested-for-coronavirus/\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/get-tested-for-coronavirus/).

Protecting the vulnerable

Clinically extremely vulnerable people are advised to follow the same guidance as everyone else.

However, as someone who is at a higher risk of becoming seriously ill if you were to catch COVID-19, you should think particularly carefully about precautions you can continue to take. These precautions are included in the [guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/19-july-guidance-on-protecting-people-who-are-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-from-covid-19\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/19-july-guidance-on-protecting-people-who-are-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-from-covid-19).

Handling objects and communal resources

Surfaces can become contaminated with viruses like COVID-19. Once contaminated, touching them can transfer viruses to people's eyes, nose or mouth. From there, viruses can enter someone's body and infect them. This means that, touching or kissing objects that are handled communally including consumables, carries a risk of catching or spreading a virus.

The use of shared communal objects, including consumables, is now a personal choice. However, you are advised to follow [the advice on personal hygiene \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/coronavirus-how-to-stay-safe-and-help-prevent-the-spread\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/coronavirus-how-to-stay-safe-and-help-prevent-the-spread).

Those responsible for places of worship should facilitate access to hygiene facilities, for example by providing cleaning facilities and hand sanitiser.

Singing, music, and performances

There are no limits on the number of people who can sing or perform indoors or outdoors. However, some activities can also increase the risk of catching or passing on COVID-19. This happens where people are doing activities which generate more particles as they breathe heavily, such as singing, dancing, exercising or raising their voices.

The risk is greatest where these activities take place when people are in close contact with others, for example in crowded indoor spaces where people are raising their voices.

We would encourage everyone to continue to wear their face coverings while singing if they feel able to do so. However we recognise that not everyone will feel able to do this. Therefore, there will be a reasonable excuse to remove a mask to sing if someone wishes to do so.

In situations where there is a higher risk of catching or passing on COVID-19, you should be particularly careful to follow the [guidance on keeping yourself and others safe](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/coronavirus-how-to-stay-safe-and-help-prevent-the-spread) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/coronavirus-how-to-stay-safe-and-help-prevent-the-spread>) as we return to normality.

Venues

All places of worship should follow the principles set out in the [working safely guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19>). The [working safely guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19>) is also relevant to those responsible for maintaining venues which are used by the public and includes further information on cleaning and ventilation.

Employers and venue managers continue to have a legal duty to manage risks to those affected by their business or organisation. The way to do this is to carry out a health and safety risk assessment, including the risk of COVID-19, and to take reasonable steps to mitigate the risks you identify. Working Safely guidance sets out a range of mitigations employers and venue managers should consider including:

- cleaning surfaces that people touch regularly;
- identifying poorly-ventilated areas in the venue and taking steps to improve air flow;
- ensuring that staff and visitors who are unwell do not attend the workplace or venue;
- communicating to staff and visitors the measures you have put in place.

Food and drink

Where food and drinks are consumed, staff and attendees should follow the [guidance for restaurants, pubs, bars, nightclubs and takeaway services](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/restaurants-pubs-bars-nightclubs-and-takeaway-services) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/restaurants-pubs-bars-nightclubs-and-takeaway-services>).

Face coverings will not be required in hospitality settings such as cafes, restaurants and pubs. This is because it is not practical for customers to keep removing their face coverings to eat or drink.

There is no requirement for guests to be placed on socially distanced tables though they should consider the risks of not maintaining social distancing, as set out in the guidance on [how to stay safe and prevent the spread](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/coronavirus-how-to-stay-safe-and-help-prevent-the-spread) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/coronavirus-how-to-stay-safe-and-help-prevent-the-spread>).

NHS COVID Pass

The NHS COVID Pass is a tool that can help limit transmission of COVID in places where it is used. Its use is mandatory in certain places where large crowds gather, in order to allow them to stay open more safely, and to prevent unsustainable pressure on the NHS.

The NHS COVID Pass is not required as a condition of entry to places of worship when they are being used for communal worship, weddings, funerals and other ceremonies to mark key life events. Receptions which take place after such events, such as Wedding receptions, will need to comply with the new requirement where they meet the attendee thresholds set out in guidance and they are organised by a business, a charitable, benevolent, or philanthropic institution or a public body (and not an individual).

You can find out more about the use of the NHS COVID Pass, and the legal requirements for organisations here: [Working Safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-(COVID-19)) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19>).

Using the NHS COVID-19 app

Using [the NHS COVID-19 app](https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/nhs-covid-19/) (<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/nhs-covid-19/>) helps stop the spread of the virus by informing you that you have been in close contact with someone who has since tested positive for coronavirus, even if you don't know each other. The app is free and easy to use.

The app also allows people to report symptoms, order a coronavirus test and check in to venues using a QR code. To help protect yourself and others, [download and use the latest version of the NHS COVID-19 app](https://www.covid19.nhs.uk/) (<https://www.covid19.nhs.uk/>).

Collection of Contact Details

You are no longer required by law to collect customer contact details, or keep a record of your staff and visitors.

However, you are encouraged to continue to display an NHS QR code for customers wishing to check in using the app, as this will help to reduce the spread of the virus and protect your customers, visitors and staff. You do not have to ask customers to check in, or turn them away if they refuse.

If you display an NHS QR code, you should also have a system to collect (and securely store) names and contact details for those who ask to check-in but do not have access to a smartphone or prefer not to use the app.

Please see the guidance on [maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace>).

Other guidance

This guidance has been published alongside other specific guidance provided by the government (all of which is subject to review and update), which should be used together to ensure public safety. These include:

- [guidance for wedding and civil partnership ceremonies, receptions and celebrations](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-wedding-and-civil-partnership-ceremonies-receptions-and-celebrations-guidance-from-step-4) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-wedding-and-civil-partnership-ceremonies-receptions-and-celebrations-guidance-from-step-4>)

- [guidance for funerals and commemorative events](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic)
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>)
- [guidance for restaurants, pubs, bars, nightclubs and takeaway services](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/restaurants-pubs-bars-nightclubs-and-takeaway-services)
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/restaurants-pubs-bars-nightclubs-and-takeaway-services>)
- [guidance for guest accommodation](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/hotels-and-guest-accommodation) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/hotels-and-guest-accommodation>)
- [guidance for events and attractions](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/events-and-attractions) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/events-and-attractions>)
- [guidance on face coverings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>)
- [guidance on maintaining records to support NHS Test and Trace](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace)
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace>)
- [guidance on protecting vulnerable people](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/19-july-guidance-on-protecting-people-who-are-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-from-covid-19) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/19-july-guidance-on-protecting-people-who-are-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-from-covid-19>)

Annex A: Template form for collecting consent and contact details for attendees at places of worship

In order to support the NHS Test and Trace programme, we are taking contact details (name and telephone number) for all visitors, as well as recording times entering and leaving (name of place of worship).

In line with guidance issued by the Department for Health and Social Care, we will keep your details safely and in compliance with GDPR legislation for 21 days before securely disposing of or deleting them. We will only share your details with NHS Test and Trace, if asked, in the event that it is needed to help stop the spread of coronavirus. We will not use your details for any other purposes or pass them on to anyone else.

Thank you for your understanding.

If you agree to providing your information for this reason, please complete the following form:

Name	
Tel. No	
Signature	
Date	

Published 16 July 2021

Last updated 10 December 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 10 December 2021

Incorporating changes announced by the Prime Minister on 8 December when announcing the implementation of Plan B restrictions.

2. 16 July 2021

First published.

Related content

- [Guidance on coronavirus \(COVID-19\) measures for grassroots sport participants, providers and facility operators \(/government/publications/guidance-on-coronavirus-covid-19-measures-for-grassroots-sport-participants-providers-and-facility-operators\)](/government/publications/guidance-on-coronavirus-covid-19-measures-for-grassroots-sport-participants-providers-and-facility-operators)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Wedding and civil partnership ceremonies, receptions and celebrations \(/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-wedding-and-civil-partnership-ceremonies-receptions-and-celebrations\)](/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-wedding-and-civil-partnership-ceremonies-receptions-and-celebrations)
- [Guidance on coronavirus \(COVID-19\) measures for elite sport \(/government/publications/guidance-on-coronavirus-covid-19-measures-for-elite-sport\)](/government/publications/guidance-on-coronavirus-covid-19-measures-for-elite-sport)
- [Protective measures for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings for children during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak \(/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak\)](/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak)

COVID-19 vaccinations

[Book your coronavirus vaccination and booster dose on the NHS website \(https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/)

Explore the topic

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) \(/coronavirus-taxon\)](/coronavirus-taxon)

OGI

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated

© [Crown copyright](#)