

COVID-19 – community advice by Dr Billal, Consultant Cardiologist, Lancashire Cardiac Centre, Blackpool Victoria Hospital

Why has the government implemented a lockdown?

- COVID-19 is a **highly infectious** disease which is transmitted by droplets; it is airborne and can remain in the air for three hours. It remains on surfaces for several hours.
- One person will **infect an average of 2.6 people**; this means that over a period of 30 days, 406 people will be affected. Over a period of 60 days, nearly 50,000 people could end up infected!
- Although the vast majority of people who get the disease will only have **mild symptoms**, approximately 20% of those tested in other countries have ended up **severely ill in hospital**.
- Of the severely ill that end up in hospital, around **25% require an Intensive Care bed**.
- The lockdown is **absolutely vital** in order for the health service to be able to cope with the rapidly increasing number of patients requiring **oxygen and ventilation**.
- There is a limited number of intensive care beds and staff, therefore, **slowing down the spread will save lives and allow the NHS to cope better**.

“I have no symptoms so I cannot pass it on?” FALSE

- 30% of people who have the virus will have **no noticeable symptoms** whatsoever.
- In relation to the remaining 70% who will develop symptoms, **half will have already transmitted the virus** upon others by the point they show any signs of being unwell!
- The virus is therefore **spread rapidly** from individuals who are falsely under the impression that they do not have it due to an absence of symptoms. It is for this reason that **social distancing is crucial!**

Looking after those at high risk

- You are at a particularly **high risk** if you are:
 - **elderly** (over the age of 70);
 - suffering from **breathing difficulty**;
 - have an existing **heart disease/condition**;
 - have undergone **chemotherapy**; or
 - in your last trimester of **pregnancy**.
- The strategy is to **prevent** this group from catching the virus hence the government has put in place stringent measures.
- Accordingly, if you are at risk and live with others, you **must stay in isolation as a precaution**, ensuring that you:
 - stay in your **own room**;

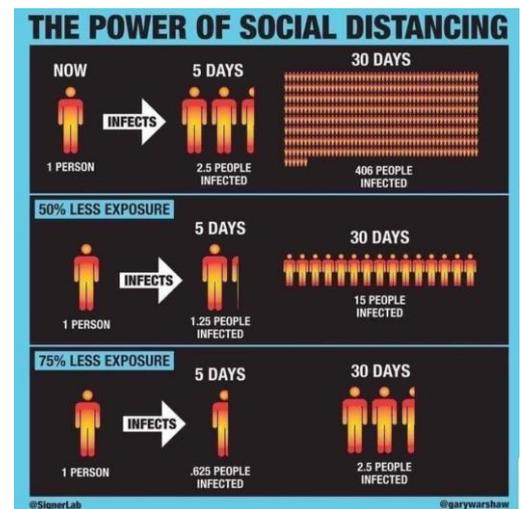
- use a **separate** bathroom (where possible);
- keep **two meters** distance from others;
- **wash hands** with soap regularly; and
- keep kids away.
- The government and NHS have provided **extensive advice** on the steps that should be undertaken so please apply them stringently. See <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

When to self-isolate and what is it?

- If you develop symptoms of a **fever** or a **new persistent cough** then you **MUST self-isolate**.
- Self-isolate means you **DO NOT leave the house**. You stay in one room and leave only to use bathroom or kitchen if necessary for a period of **7 days** from the start of symptoms.
- If other members of your household develop symptoms then they must **stay indoors for 14 days**. If they develop symptoms then they should stay isolated for a further 7 days from the start of their symptoms.
- Those in self-isolation must have **no physical contact** with others and at least maintaining a **2 meter distance** when in the same room.
- **DO NOT** go to your GP and only call 111 if you feel very ill (ill enough to think you might need to go to hospital).

What is social Distancing?

- Social distancing means:
 - avoiding physical contact;
 - avoiding spaces where there may be gatherings of people;
 - keeping two meters away from anyone else;
 - avoiding physical contact; and
 - only leaving the home where absolutely necessary.
- With social distancing the number of people infected will be **drastically reduced!**



Looking after yourself in Lockdown

- Provided you are NOT self-isolating, or at risk, only leave the house for daily exercise once a day, essential shopping and essential work (key workers only).
- **Follow social distancing rules** if leaving the home.
- If in self-isolation, exercise at home, bodyweight exercises, eat real food, avoid processed foods and sugar.

Mental health

- Isolation and social distancing may cause stress, this can be a difficult time due to lack of space, negative thinking and social media negativity. Accordingly, ensure to use technology to **keep in touch with loved ones**.
- Don't unnecessarily forward **negative WhatsApp messages**; also spend a quick moment to verify a message before you forward to masses.
- **Use this time productively**, there are multiple online courses and resources that are now free or highly discounted (e.g. Open University, Centre of Excellence)
- Form **routines** at home, exercise, read, prayer, meditation, reflection, check up and **help your neighbours**.

How to support those in need?

- Join community groups, support foodbanks, shop for those in isolation or the vulnerable.
- Call young and elderly relatives to check up on them and keep morale high.
- Volunteer to help the NHS if aged between 18-50 and well.

Remember

- **Do not be overly alarmed** by the situation, if we apply the guidelines then we can slow it down. The more stringent we are, the quicker we will be able to **return to some form of normality**.
- The vast majority of public are **simply being asked to stay at home, NHS staff** (and other key workers) are **exposing themselves and their families** by continuing to help the sick and serve society – **it is a basic human duty to help them by staying at home!**