# babylon

# Self-isolation explained

Babylon's UK essential guide to what it really means

# Should you go outside? Can friends come over for dinner? Is shopping allowed?

At Babylon, our doctors have provided the following advice to help you cope and keep you informed whilst staying at home or during self-isolation.

How do you self-isolate?

Coronavirus advice

babylon

Stay at home

# What does self-isolating mean?

Self-isolation means remaining indoors and avoiding contact with other people to help prevent you from spreading coronavirus to your family, friends and the wider community.

In practical terms, this means that you must:

- stay at home
- not go to work, school or public areas
- not use public transport like buses, trains, tubes or taxis
- avoid visitors to your home
- ask friends, family members or delivery services to carry out errands for you - such as getting groceries or medications

You can leave your home to exercise once a day - but stay at least 2 metres (or at least 3 steps) away from other people.

# Who needs to self-isolate?

Currently in the UK, self-isolation is relevant to several groups of people:

## People with coronavirus symptoms

If you have a high temperature or a new continuous cough, you need to self-isolate for 7 days from when your symptoms started. You should remain in isolation for as long as you have a fever beyond that. If you still have a cough after 7 days, you do not need to continue self-isolating.

## People who live with someone that has coronavirus symptoms

If one person has symptoms of coronavirus, the rest of the household needs to self-isolate for 14 days as it is likely that people who live in the same household will infect one another, or already be infected. If others in the household get symptoms, they need to stay home for 7 days from the moment they get symptoms, regardless of what stage of the 14 day isolation period they become unwell.

# When should self isolation end?

If you've been self-isolating because of coronavirus symptoms, your self-isolation period ends after 7 days. If your household has been self-isolating, the self-isolation period ends after 14 days for those that have not developed symptoms. If someone in the household develops symptoms, that individual must self-isolate for 7 days from the first day they got symptoms.

As of Monday the 23rd of March everyone, regardless of age or underlying health conditions, should carry out social distancing and stay home, with only a small number of exceptions

**The general public must stay at home to stop coronavirus spreading**

Regardless of symptoms, people of all ages must stay at home and can only leave the house to:

- Shop for basic essentials (only when really needed)
- Do one form of exercise a day (e.g. a run, walk or cycle, alone or with people they live with)
- Get or provide medical help (e.g. to visit a pharmacy for medicines or deliver essential supplies to a vulnerable person)
- Travel to and from work, only if this is absolutely necessary

When leaving the house for the above exceptional reasons, people must maintain a distance of 2m (6ft) between themselves and other people.

Work

# What is social distancing and why do we need to do it?

Coronavirus spreads if people are in close sustained contact. The aim of social distancing is to prevent the spread of infection by limiting the amount of physical or close contact people have with one another.

Social distancing includes:

- Working from home
- Avoiding both large and small gatherings with friends or family, except those that live in your household
- Avoiding non-essential use of public transport
- Keeping in touch using remote technology, such as mobile phones and the internet

# Ask a Babylon doctor.

## I am finding staying at home and self-isolation hard, what can I do to manage my anxiety and mental health?

Social isolation is not good for our mental health. So, it is important to stay in touch with friends, relatives and co-workers as much as possible. In particular, consider those most vulnerable and plan regular phone calls to check in on how they're doing.

Social distancing can bring up some challenges, especially if you live alone or are single.

Here are some tips for keeping sane and positive:

**Focus on your health** - The fact that  pubs have been closed could be a great opportunity to finally do a bit of that detox you'd always been meaning to do.

**Keep active** - Going outdoors once a day for exercise, such as a walk or run in the park, will give your endorphins a boost.

**Bring exercise indoors** - If leaving the house is challenging, try online exercise videos - yoga, dance, pilates, aerobics- you can buy online courses or just do a free one on YouTube.

**Relax and sleep** - Make the most of the early nights and catch up on some sleep. Try some mindfulness or meditation to help your mind switch off and restore calm. Apps like Headspace, Calm have free trials, or you can switch off to a meditation or breathing video on YouTube.

**Natural light** - It's important for our sleep-wake cycle and mood to have natural light in our home. Make sure to throw your curtains open in the morning and shut them at night.

**Make a routine** - Write down a 'schedule' for your days to keep you motivated, for example:

| | |
|---|---|
| 8am | Wake up and sitting with meditation music in bed |
| 8.30 | Daily stretch or run |
| 9.00 | Breakfast |
| 9.30 | Gratitude diary |
| 9.45 | Emails and news |
| 10.30 | Call mum/friend/granny |
| 11.30 | Try online Spanish course |

**Keep connected** - Make a time each day to call/video call someone, or join a group on Facebook i.e. Global Support for COVID-19 which offers free video yoga, meditation, virtual social meetings

**Smile** - Remember we are all in this together and that we can uplift and support, rather than fight against each other (for loo roll!)

**Keep a gratitude diary** - Write down 3 things you are grateful for each day. Even if it is 'I have a roof over my head', 'I have a loo roll!', this will remind ourselves to keep perspective and stay positive, this won't last forever

**Learn something new** - Always wanted to learn to speak French/knit/make origami or be a poker-pro? Try an online course and get practising!

**Play board games** - whether that's with flatmates or family - make quizzes, finally read that book, or why not start a Skype/Zoom/FaceTime book club/social group

**Spring clean** - Clear out your cupboards/wardrobe; we finally have the time to do our life admin.

**Help someone who may be in need** - Do you know someone who can't get to the shops (someone who has been told to avoid going out at all due to an underlying health condition?) You could pop a form through the letterbox offering any help in the form of shopping, a telephone call, posting letters or urgent supplies.

**Dr Sarah Wells Babylon's GP**

# How can I boost my immunity during isolation?

There are many simple things you can do whilst in self-isolation to boost your immune system.

Doing indoor exercises are beneficial for a whole host of things not just immune boosting, it will help boost your energy levels, improve your mood and improve physical health. There are numerous online exercises/videos you can access to help you keep fit and active.

Eating well and staying hydrated will keep your body fuelled with nutrients it needs. Fruit,vegetables and dairy are filled with antioxidants and important vitamins which help your immune system.

Sleep well. Getting enough sleep has proven health benefits. A good immune system being one of them. Aim for around 6-8 hours a night for overall health and physical benefit.

Lastly, hygiene. Can't stress this enough. Reduce your risk of getting infections in the first place. Washing your hands regularly and disposing of used tissues quickly will help to keep you healthy.

# Sleeping tips during self-isolation?

1. **Routine:** Try your best to stick to a bedtime routine or 'sleep hygiene'; whether that's keeping to the same bedtime and getting up time (aiming for 8 hours sleep), having a warm caffeine-free drink, reading a book or having a warm bath. It gets your mind and body ready for getting to sleep, and is important to maintain even if your other routines have altered recently.

2. **A space dedicated to sleeping:** Keep your bedroom for sleeping and intimacy only, so try to keep your phone, computers, other gadgets and TV out of it, or turn them off/to silent an hour before wanting to get to sleep. Try to also limit checking the news only twice a day.

3. **Winding down:** Whether that's writing down any worries or to-do lists for tomorrow to get them out of your head, using relaxation, meditation or sleep apps, listening to white noise- and adding these to your normal sleep routine.

**- Dr Kate Smith, Babylon GP**

# My partner and I are staying at home together, how can we avoid arguments during quarantine?

Define boundaries and rules so each person can feel a sense of control about their space.

Communicate. Recognise that this is not a natural situation and that no matter how much they get on with each other, being in each other's company in an emotional time is bound to cause arguments. Pre-empt these by having time to discuss fears/worries but also have rules perhaps for each other if there are certain things that annoy you like clothes on the floor or toilet seat up etc. These are things that for once the other partner should agree to try and avoid doing for this period of time. Communicating these things early can avoid these leading to rows later on.

They could see it as a positive – a time to get to know each other more than they did before – cook for one another, do a 'fun' indoor activity or plan a surprise for each other just to change the monotony of it all.

Remember to also communicate with the outside world through online means – such as video and even group chats. Set a time when you can regularly do this – for different friends and family all around the world.

Find some time to yourself. Everybody needs time alone. So just explain this and try to agree that space is okay when this is needed.

Try and look at the positives – read that book you've always wanted to, learn a skill – there are so many online courses and people are doing free things like online yoga. Do an exercise class together, cook, life draw – the possibilities are endless!

**Dr Elise Dallas, Babylon GP**

# How do I successfully stay home or self-isolate with young children?

The advice is to try and follow guidance to the best of your ability when living with young children, but everyone knows this isn't always going to be practical or possible. Children should follow social distancing measures in the same way as adults do. This means only socialising with the people in their household and not attending any small or large gatherings with other children or adults.

**Dr Claudia Pastides, Babylon GP**

# Frequently asked questions

**Why is it beneficial to open windows during self-isolation?**

It is a good idea to open your windows regularly to let fresh air in. It will make you feel better and although it still isn't 100% clear whether coronavirus can survive in the air for short periods or not, it is probably wise to keep your room well ventilated just in case.

**Can I meet a friend outside and go for a walk?**

If you're self-isolating, you can go outside once a day to exercise, but you must stay at least 2 metres away from other people.. If you're staying at home but not self-isolating, you can go outside once a day for exercise, alone or with members of your household

**Does reading a book really help to calm anxiety?**

If you enjoy reading, immersing yourself in a book can be a useful distraction and can keep you from pressing refresh on your social media news feed.

**Can I go outside for a walk or to exercise, when I don't have symptoms?**

If you're self-isolating because you might have coronavirus, you should stay home but you can go outside once per day for exercise, such as a walk or run. You must stay at least 2 metres (6 ft) away from other people when doing so. If you usually head out to the gym, find an alternative session to do at home. Exercise is good for both your mental and physical health. There are lots of at-home exercise apps out there that are offering free subscriptions at this time to help those self-isolating..

**Should I go and visit the grandparents?**

No. If you are self-isolating because you have coronavirus symptoms, you should not visit anybody. If you are staying at home but not self-isolating and the grandparents are vulnerable/have a medical need - you can drop off essential supplies but should avoid close contact, such as by not entering their house.

**What if I get symptoms/what if my condition changes?**

If you're self-isolating, it's important to know that most people with COVID-19 are expected to experience only mild symptoms.

The majority of people who catch coronavirus will make a full recovery without medical attention. If your symptoms get worse after one week or you believe you are at greater risk, use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service or call 999 in an emergency.

**Dr Claudia Pastides, Babylon GP**

# How does Babylon's COVID-19 Care Assistant work?

Babylon's new COVID-19 Care Assistant feature can be used 24/7 by Babylon members and combines continually-updated information, triage, live chat, symptom tracking, virtual consultation and doctor referrals.

The new feature aims to help people with questions or concerns regarding coronavirus. For those diagnosed with similar symptoms, will be advised to self-isolate, whilst those who need more intensive attention will be given a detailed and thorough care plan to help monitor their illness. The Babylon app is free to download and create a membership, giving anyone in the UK access to much of this new service for free.
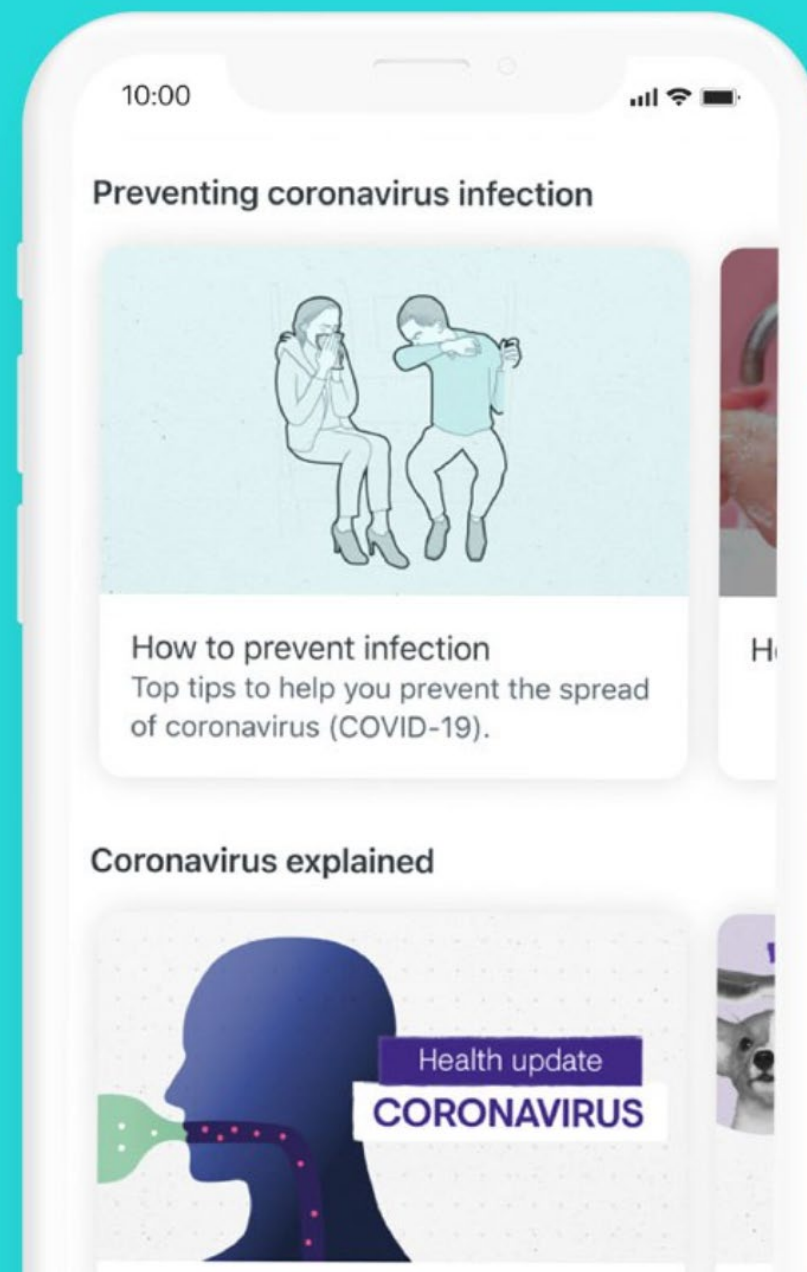
# Babylon Covid-19 Care Assistant

**INFORM**
High quality information on coronavirus and what to do about it

**DECIDE**
Support the decision to self-isolate with our AI Symptom Checker

**CONNECT**
Live Chat support with coronavirus-trained professionals

**MONITOR**
Digital in-app monitoring, with a care plan for each individual

**CONSULT**
Virtual consultations with licensed clinicians when patients need it

**REFER**
Swift transfer to face-to-face and emergency care when it's needed

POPULATION SERVED

COVID-19 RISK

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## Help and Support

If you need any help, please get in touch
with our Support Team.

Email: support@babylonhealth.com
Phone: 0330 2231 008