

COVID-19 Myth Busters and FAQs

We've answered some of your most asked questions and dispelled some myths about the COVID-19 pandemic in this document. We hope you find it helpful.

If you hear about any other myths that we should bust, let us know at:

public.health@merton.gov.uk

FAQs

1. What is COVID-19, is it a bacteria or a virus?

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a virus called coronavirus. The main symptoms to look out for are a high temperature, a new continuous cough and a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

If you experience any symptoms, stay at home and request a test from www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by calling 119.

2. When can I have the new COVID-19 vaccine?

This free vaccine has started to be rolled out nationally and the NHS is currently offering the COVID-19 vaccine to people most at risk from coronavirus.

At this time, the vaccine is being offered in some hospitals to:

- some people aged 80 and over who already have a hospital appointment in the next few weeks
- people who work in care homes
- health care workers at high risk

Once more doses are bought, it will be rolled out to the other priority groups. The full prioritisation list can be found [here](#).

3. How long do I have to wait if I'm not in a priority group?

If you are not in one of the priority groups, you will need to wait your turn, it's likely that the rest of the population will be able to get this free vaccine from spring 2021, depending on supply and uptake.

4. Is the vaccine safe?

The independent medicines regulator, the MHRA's renowned teams of scientists and clinicians have advised that the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has passed their strict quality, safety, and effectiveness tests and can be given to people in the UK.

[Find out how the MRHA gave approval for the vaccine](#)

[Find out more information on the vaccine and its ingredients](#)

MYTHS

5. COVID-19 only affects the elderly and those with underlying conditions

COVID-19 can make anyone seriously ill, but for some people the risk of severe illness is higher. Older people, and people with underlying health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, asthma and cancer appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus.

There have been cases of young, perfectly healthy individuals getting seriously ill with COVID-19 and it's impossible to know exactly how the virus will affect you until you have it, so remember: Wash your hands, cover your face and make space.

6. The NHS is closed and we shouldn't attend appointments to save the NHS and protect themselves.

The NHS remains open and is here for you when you need it. Most appointments are over the phone or by video and measures are in place to keep you safe if you need to visit your practice. Don't be worried about adding to their workload, they are open and want to see patients who need to be seen. Contact your GP for advice.

7. I don't know anyone with COVID-19 so it doesn't apply to me

COVID-19 can make anyone ill and it's impossible to know if they have the disease just by looking at them. Some people are 'asymptomatic', which means they may be carrying the virus and be infectious, but are not displaying any symptoms. You could be carrying it and without knowing, pass it on to someone you love.

Remember: Wash your hands, cover your face and make space.

8. COVID-19 is the same as a bad flu season or: COVID-19 is just the flu re-branded

Influenza (flu) is a serious condition that kills, on average, 11,000 people in England each year. Sadly, COVID-19 has killed 59,618 people in England (as of 7th December 2020) and this number is rising.

Flu and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. COVID-19 is caused by infection with a new coronavirus (called SARS-Cov-2) and flu is caused by infection with influenza viruses.

Remember the flu vaccine is safe and effective and having the vaccine cannot give you the flu; get your flu jab.

6. The death rates this year are no worse than previous years and COVID-19 is not impacting these figures

The spike in COVID-19 deaths in England and Wales from mid-March have significantly increased overall death rates in 2020 compared to previous years.

Total deaths up to mid-March 2020 were in fact lower than or similar to the five-year average for 2015–19, in part due to a mild influenza season in the 2019–20 winter. But the sudden rise in Covid-19 deaths from mid-March caused a sharp spike in overall deaths, resulting in about 58,000 excess registered deaths to 7 August 2020 compared with the 2015–19 average for the same period.

7. COVID-19 is caused by 5G

Viruses cannot travel on radio waves/mobile networks and COVID-19 is spreading in many countries that do not have 5G mobile networks.

COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets from the nose or mouth when an infected person coughs, sneezes or exhales. People can also be infected by touching a contaminated surface and then touching their eyes, mouth or nose.

8. COVID-19 is only a respiratory disease, and will only last a couple of weeks

COVID-19 is more than just a bad cold and some people will shrug off the illness quickly, but for other it could leave long-lasting problems. Age, gender and other health conditions all increase the risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 and the more invasive the treatment, the longer the recovery is likely to take.

In response to 'long COVID', which is estimated to affect more than 60,000 people in the UK, the NHS has set up specialist clinics to help those affected which cause continuing fatigue, breathlessness and pain.

Sadly, COVID-19 has killed 59,618 people in England (as of 7th December 2020) and this number is rising.

9. Hospitals are empty, testing units are empty, this is a hoax

This is simply not true. There is increasing pressure on the NHS and as of 1st December 2020 there are 346 inpatients in SWL hospitals with confirmed COVID-19, which is up from 330 the previous week.

Between 24th and 30th November, on average over 235 people (per 100,000) were tested daily for COVID-19 in the community in Merton (pillar 2 only). Due the number of confirmed

cases of COVID-19 across London, testing capacity has been increased and if you have any symptoms, you should be able to access a test with few problems.

If you experience any symptoms, stay at home and request a test from www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by calling 119.

10. Children are immune to COVID-19 as there's no recorded instances of very small children or babies passing the virus to anyone.

Children can be infected with coronavirus and become ill with COVID-19. However, they appear to be less susceptible to infection than adults and their symptoms are generally milder. More research is needed to fully understand coronavirus in children and the role children play in transmitting the virus, although early indications suggest that there is less transmission from children than adults.

If you experience any symptoms, stay at home and request a test from www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by calling 119.

11. COVID-19 will be over by Christmas

Unfortunately COVID-19 is far from over and Christmas will look and feel very different this year. The rules are changing so that family and friends can spend this time together between 23 and 27 December, but this 'Christmas bubble' can be formed of no more than three households.

We must continue to adhere to the local tier system to before, during and after the festive period to continue to protect ourselves and our loved ones.

Want to find out more about the 'Christmas Bubble' guidance and to hear practical tips on reducing the risk of COVID-19 during the holiday season? E-mail Public.health@merton.gov.uk

12. Face coverings are not effective

Coronavirus (COVID-19) usually spreads by droplets from coughs, sneezes and speaking. These droplets can also be picked up from surfaces, if you touch a surface and then your face without washing your hands first. This is why social distancing, regular hand hygiene, and covering coughs and sneezes is so important in controlling the spread of the virus.

The best available scientific evidence is that, when used correctly, wearing a face covering may reduce the spread of coronavirus droplets in certain circumstances, helping to protect others.

#KeepMertonSafe