

Self isolation **for close contacts** from 16th August – the rules in England **Updated 20th October 2021** with latest in Scotland and Wales

From **Monday 16 August**, people who are fully vaccinated or aged under 18 and 6 months will no longer be legally required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. That includes where they live in the same household as someone who has tested positive or has symptoms.

Fully vaccinated means having been vaccinated with an MHRA approved Covid-19 vaccine in the UK, and at least 14 days have passed since they received the recommended doses of that vaccine.

Under the new guidance **for England** a person who is not legally required to self-isolate is advised to have a PCR test as soon as possible, although this is advice not a rule. People can order a PCR home test online or by calling 119, or going to a test site. The person does not have to self-isolate whilst awaiting the test result.

In Wales a close contact who is fully vaccinated or under 18 does not have to self-isolate if they do not have any symptoms but should get a PCR test on day 2 and day 8. If the close contact is not fully vaccinated but has symptoms they will need to self-isolate for 10 days and should also get a PCR test on day 2 and day 8.

In Scotland, a close contact does not have to self-isolate if they

- **have received two doses of the COVID-19 vaccination under a UK Government programme (and 2 weeks have passed since receiving the second dose), or are under 18; and**
- **are asymptomatic; and**
- **return a negative PCR test**

Individuals under 18 years or medically unable to be vaccinated are required to self-isolate until they return a negative PCR test and providing they remain asymptomatic, they will be able to end self-isolation as a close contact. For individuals turning 18, they should follow the guidance for under 18 year olds for 4 months to allow time to become fully vaccinated. After that, if they are partially or non-vaccinated, they will be required to self-isolate for 10 days as a close contact.

There are links at the end of this article to the current advice for each nation.

In all cases if the close contact has symptoms, they should self-isolate immediately for 10 days and get a PCR test.

Who still has to self-isolate?

If a close contact does not meet any of the above criteria they are still required to self-isolate for 10 days following the day that their household member's symptoms started (or, if asymptomatic, the day the person took their test) or, for non-household contacts, for 10 days from the day after they last had contact with the person who tested positive.

If someone has Covid 19 symptoms or has received a positive test result must still self-isolate even if fully vaccinated or under 18.

Who counts as a contact?

This is where a person has been close to someone who has tested positive any time from 2 days before the person developed symptoms or from 2 days before the test if they did not have symptoms and up to 10 days after.

Close contact remains defined as:

- face-to-face contact, including being coughed on or having a face-to-face conversation within one metre;
- been within one metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact; and
- been within 2 metres of someone for more than 15 minutes (either as a one-off contact, or added up together over one day).
- It can include travelling the same vehicle but does not include an interaction through a perspex or other screen unless there has been other contact as above.

Advice for vaccinated contacts

The government advises that, as well as getting a PCR test, those who do not have to self-isolate as contacts should consider taking certain steps to help reduce the risk of transmission, such as:

- limiting close contact with people outside their household, especially in enclosed spaces;
- wearing a face covering in enclosed spaces and where they are unable to maintain social distancing;
- limiting contact with anyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable; and
- taking part in regular LFD testing.

The advice is to follow these precautions until 10 full days after their most recent contact with the person who has tested positive for Covid-19 (or, if that person is in the individual's household, for the duration of that person's self-isolation).

We recommend that you ensure your employees are aware of the new rules and that they are still self-isolating if required to do so. You could ask them to tell you if they have had a close contact but do not need to self-isolate because they are fully vaccinated so that you can seek to put additional steps in place as above.

This is a link to the Government announcement [here](#).

Links to latest guidance:

England

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>

Scotland

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-general-guidance-for-safer-workplaces/pages/test-and-protect-and-self-isolation/>

Wales

<https://gov.wales/self-isolation#section-81574>