

It's a national effort to win coronavirus fight, we all have crucial part to play

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As a country we are in the fortunate position of being home to an extraordinary wealth of experts – scientists, researchers and academics – all at the forefront of their chosen fields.

These are people who have dedicated their whole lives to studying, researching, and honing their knowledge in their chosen area of expertise, including in vaccines and pandemics; knowledge that is now being applied to tackling COVID-19.

Now, as we collectively face down a global pandemic, we need these experts more than ever. And we need their voices, and their advice, to be full, frank and honest – our approach to this virus will always be guided by the scientific evidence.

Of course, every virus is different. But what we do know is that epidemics are like a pole vaulter taking flight: the outbreak starts slowly, takes off rapidly, reaches a peak and then comes back down to earth. Right now, we need to flatten that peak.

We have now entered the delay phase of this pandemic and we want to delay the spread and reduce its efforts. This is response to the current spread of the disease in the UK that reflects the fact that we are few weeks some countries in terms of the outbreak of the disease.

By taking steps to squash the peak, we will be better able to look after the NHS and put it in a stronger position to respond in the months to come – and make sure it is better equipped to offer better care to those people for whom this disease has more chance of being fatal.

We all have a crucial part to play. This is a mild disease in most people. But it is paramount that we do everything possible to protect ourselves, to protect others, and protect the NHS.

This means heeding the health advice and using common sense. If you have even mild symptoms of coronavirus infection – including a new continuous cough and or a high temperature – then you [stay at home](#) and don't leave your house for 7 days from when your symptoms started.

For people without symptoms we have 4 simple words of advice:

Keep. Washing. Your. Hands.

Wash them often, wash them even when wouldn't you normally wash them, and wash them with soap for 20 seconds at a time.

I've opted for Prince's, Raspberry Beret as my own personal handwash song. You can choose your own.

The situation that the Prime Minister, the Chief Medical Officer and I outlined last week is a sobering one.

I am certain many people will be understandably worried and anxious, because these are not normal times. COVID-19 is a new virus that we don't have immunity against, and we don't yet have a vaccine for.

Since the very first cases were reported in China in January, the science and medical community have been united in a common purpose: protecting lives by providing evidence-based advice to elected leaders on when we should act, how we should act and why we should act.

This is going to be a national effort. Together, we all need to be brave enough to stay calm, act rationally and follow the science. We will need to take care not to spread the disease and take care of each other.