

Next stage of expanded coronavirus (COVID-19) public information campaign launches

People are being urged to stay at home for seven days if they develop a high temperature or new continuous cough as part of an expanded public awareness campaign in the fight against COVID-19, Health Secretary Matt Hancock has announced today (Sunday 15 March).

For the first time, members of the public will see advice in TV adverts featuring Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty and voiced by actor Mark Strong as part of the government's drive to ensure everyone knows the best way to limit and delay the spread of the COVID-19.

Building on the current campaign, which reinforces the importance of washing your hands more often, the next phase reflects the [government's shift into the 'delay' phase of its action plan](#) to limit the spread of the virus. A key part of this is asking people to self-isolate for seven days if they develop a high temperature or a new continuous cough – however mild.

As well as on TV, people will see and hear the campaign advice in newspapers and magazines, on drive-time radio, online and through social media and on billboards and large digital displays, including at bus stops.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Coronavirus is the biggest public health crisis we have faced in a generation. It continues to spread both in the UK and around the world and we need to accept that sadly, many more of us will become infected.

The government and the NHS are working 24/7 to fight this virus. We must all work together and play our own part in protecting ourselves and each other, as well as our NHS, from this disease. This expanded campaign will focus on ensuring the public knows exactly what they should be doing to keep themselves and others safe.

Washing hands regularly for 20 seconds or more remains the single most important thing an individual can do, but we now also need to ask anyone with a high temperature or new continuous cough – however mild – to isolate yourself and stay at home for seven days. You should continue to follow our online clinical advice and not go to A&E or your GP if you develop mild symptoms.

Combating this virus will require a national effort – we all have a role to play to slow its spread and protect the elderly and the vulnerable.

Dr Yvonne Doyle, Public Health England's Medical Director said:

We know that novel coronavirus affects the most vulnerable the most and so it is absolutely vital that we do everything we can to protect them. This new guidance sets out what we can all do to help save the lives of those most at risk.

This week, the UK's Chief Medical Officers raised the risk to the public from moderate to high. The campaign offers clear, practical advice so the public can play their part in preventing and slowing the spread of the virus.

As per the current advice, the most important thing individuals can do to protect themselves remains washing their hands more often, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and water. Make sure you cough or sneeze into a tissue, put it in a bin and wash your hands.

The next phase of the awareness campaign also reiterates the importance of seeking help online by visiting [NHS.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) to check your symptoms and follow the medical advice, rather than visiting your GP. It also urges people with any symptoms to avoid contact with older and more vulnerable people. Where possible, we are urging people to visit the [111 website](https://www.nhs.uk/111) rather than calling, too, to ensure the phone service is readily available to those who need it.

Last week, the Prime Minister published a 'battle plan' for tackling the disease in the UK, which sets out plans for a range of scenarios. This week, the Prime Minister confirmed [the UK has moved into the second stage of this plan](#), the 'delay' phase.

NHS, Public Health England and Local Authority Public Health teams up and down the country are working tirelessly to support everyone in need of advice, testing or treatment.

Since January, public health teams and world leading scientists have been working round the clock on the COVID-19 response, and government has been working with partners across the country to provide tailored advice to the public, travellers coming into the country and those most at risk from COVID-19.