

Public reminded they must stay outside when meeting others to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19)

- From today, groups of 6 people, or 2 households, are allowed to meet outside
- Scientists and medics are urging the public not to be tempted to meet indoors as the risk of spreading the virus is significantly higher inside
- Public urged 'Let's take this next step safely' in new campaign

The public are being reminded they must stay outside when meeting others as part of the next step of easing Covid restrictions in a new film released today narrated by GP Dr Hilary Jones MBE.

The film highlights the impact of fresh air on reducing the risk of transmission and forms part of wider government 'Hands, Face, Space and Fresh Air' which reminds people to 'take this next step safely' as we gradually emerge from lockdown. The public information campaign will run across TV, radio, press, digital, out of home advertising and social media and with the TV advert airing for the first time at approximately 19.15pm on ITV on Monday 29 March.

The new guidance allows the public to see family and friends, but reiterates the importance of sticking to the rules, in order to stop the spread of the virus. The scientific explainer film illustrates the difference of how the COVID-19 virus behaves indoors compared to outdoors as groups of 6 people, or 2 households, are allowed to meet outside for the first time since December.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Every day we get closer to beating this virus. We have already vaccinated over half of the adult population – and we have new vaccines coming on stream – but we must remain vigilant.

I know the last few months have been challenging, and many people are excited to be able see friends and family outdoors for the first time in months.

As we see from rising cases in Europe, this virus still poses a very real threat. We have come so far thanks to the vaccine rollout and that progress must be protected. So let's take this next step safely, when you meet others do so outdoors, and keep a safe

distance.

Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty said:

Thanks to the efforts of the public we have reduced the number of cases and deaths but the virus is still in circulation.

The evidence is very clear that outdoor spaces are safer than indoors. It is important to remember this as we move into the next phase.

Around 1 in 3 people with coronavirus show no symptoms, so anyone could be spreading it without knowing. Someone who is infected releases particles into the air by coughing, talking or breathing.

Research shows the risk of infection is significantly lower in fresh air than indoors because:

- the closer you are to people, the greater the risk of breathing in infected particles, particularly when indoors, as it is harder to physically distance
- when indoors, smaller droplets and aerosols containing the virus that causes coronavirus (COVID-19) can remain suspended in the air for some time, especially if there is no ventilation and therefore build ups are more likely to be inhaled by others
- when outside in fresh air, the virus disperses more easily
- when outdoors, there is more room to distance, reducing the risk of breathing in larger particles from an infected person

It is important those who have had a vaccination continue to follow the rules. The full impact of the vaccine on transmission of the virus is not yet known, therefore it may be possible to spread the virus, putting others at risk.

Professor Catherine Noakes, from Leeds University, who advised on the film, said:

It's important we stick to the guidance and stay outdoors when we are meeting with people who are not from our household or bubble. An infected person releases particles into the air by coughing, talking or simply breathing.

The closer you are to people, the greater the risk of breathing in infected particles. When we are outdoors, the risk of infection is significantly lower as fresh air disperses and blows COVID-19 particles away, and we have more space to social distance from each other.

When outdoors, stick to groups of 6, or 2 households. Keep a safe distance and meet outside, because you're much safer in fresh air.

GP Dr Hilary Jones said:

As we are approaching these milestones out of lockdown, we all must be vigilant and follow the new guidelines where we can, especially as we can now see our friends and family.

We've learnt a lot about COVID-19 and how it transmits, but we've also learnt how to reduce the spread, and research shows that it's much safer to meet people in the fresh air than indoors.

As well as staying outside with people not in your household or bubble, remember to continue with other health behaviours such as washing your hands, covering your face and making space to reduce your risk of COVID-19.

To support this message, psychologist Laverne Antrobus also shares her tips and advice on overcoming pressure from friends and family to break the rules. She advises to prioritise your needs; know that it's OK to say 'no'; show your family and friends you're concerned; discuss the new guidance; and look to the future.

Psychologist Laverne Antrobus said:

The new guidance around meeting a group of people outdoors is really exciting and is a big step in right direction, however, it's really important to stick to the guidance and only meet outdoors.

This may mean being put in situations where you have to say no to joining a large group of more than 6, or perhaps feeling pressured to go indoors with people outside your bubble.

It is so important to set your boundaries and be assertive in those situations, and to continue following the guidance to keep yourself and your loved ones safe from the virus.

Hands. Face. Space and Fresh Air. campaign urges the public to adopt simple health behaviours and work together to keep their distance and control the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

We must all take this next step safely. Visit [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) for more information.