

Self-isolation to be eased for fully vaccinated adults in step 4

As part of step 4 of the Government's COVID-19 roadmap, double vaccinated people will no longer be legally required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case, the Health and Social Care Secretary has confirmed today (Tuesday 6 July).

The new rules will come into effect from 16 August, if the Government takes a decision to move into step 4. To ensure young people can make the most of their education as restrictions continue to ease, the Government also plans to exempt those aged under 18 from self-isolation if they are a close contact.

Introducing this exemption in August will enable even more people to have received both doses of the vaccine, significantly reducing the risk of severe illness and providing the fullest protection possible for people across the country. The NHS COVID-19 app will update in August in line with the new guidance on self-isolation for close contacts.

Young people and double vaccinated individuals identified as close contacts will continue to be advised to take a PCR test, to detect the virus and variants of concern. Anyone who tests positive following the PCR test will still be legally required to self-isolate, irrespective of their vaccination status.

Vaccine programme

The phenomenal success of the UK's vaccine programme – with over 86% of adults receiving their first doses – has allowed the government to continue easing restrictions and to remove self-isolation rules for double jabbed people, and move from a rules-based system to personal responsibility. The latest data shows that 27,000 lives have already been saved by COVID-19 vaccines and over 7 million infections prevented, with vaccines reducing the chance of COVID-19 infection by almost 80% after two doses and only 35% after one.

As of 6 July, over 79 million vaccine doses have now been administered in the UK, and three in five adults have received two doses. To continue to receive the fullest possible protection against COVID-19, all adults are encouraged to get their vaccine.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid told Parliament:

Asking people with COVID-19 and their close contacts to self-isolate has played a critical role in helping us get this virus under control, and I'm so grateful to the millions of people across the UK who have made sacrifices to keep the virus at bay.

Thanks to the UK's phenomenal vaccine programme and the huge wall of defence, we can safely take steps to reduce self-isolation for people who are fully vaccinated, and those aged under 18, and instead advise people to take a PCR test. Positive cases will still need to self-isolate.

Step-by-step, and jab-by-jab, we're replacing the temporary protection of the restrictions, with the long-term protection of a vaccine.

Regular testing remains critical to controlling the virus as restrictions ease. Advising double vaccinated contacts and children to take a PCR test with a requirement to self-isolate for those who test positive will reduce the risk of onward transmission. Alongside PCR testing, everyone in England is encouraged to take up the government's offer of free, twice weekly rapid testing.

As with fully vaccinated adults, children who are close contacts of a positive case will instead be advised to take a PCR test. If the PCR test is positive they will need to self-isolate, as any other positive case.

Robust protective measures are in place across schools, including twice weekly testing to protect students and prevent transmission. NHS Test and trace will continue to provide age appropriate advice for testing in schools in the coming months.

Background information

The Government will make an announcement on whether the UK will move into step 4 of the COVID-19 roadmap on 12th July on the basis of its four tests

Children who are aged under 5 years old who are identified as close contacts would only be advised to take a PCR test if the positive case is in their own household.

If someone gets their second dose just before, or after, the 16th of August, they'll need to wait until two weeks after they get the second jab to benefit from these new freedoms so the vaccine has time to build the maximum possible protection.