

# Coronavirus (COVID-19): Health Secretary's statement to Parliament

Mr Speaker, with permission, I would like to make a statement on coronavirus.

This is the most serious public health emergency in a hundred years. But through the combined efforts of the whole nation we have got through the peak.

Let's not forget what together has been achieved.

We flattened the curve and now the number of people in hospital with coronavirus is half what it was at the peak.

We protected the NHS, and the number of patients in critical care is down by two thirds.

Mercifully, the number of deaths across all settings is falling.

This Mental Health Awareness Week is an important reminder that we need to look after ourselves as well as each other, and that if you need support with your mental health, the NHS is there for you.

This is particularly important for frontline staff, and we've supported all NHS trusts to develop 24/7 mental health lines.

Mr Speaker, our plan throughout this crisis has been to slow the spread and protect the NHS.

Thanks to the resolve and shared sacrifice of the British people, the plan is working and we are now in the second phase of this fight and I want to update the House on the next steps we are taking as part of that plan.

First, we are protecting the nation's care homes with a further £600 million available directly to care homes in England and we've prioritised testing for care homes throughout and we've made sure every care home has a named NHS clinical lead and we're requiring local authorities to conduct daily reviews of the situation on the ground, so that every care home gets the support it needs each and every day.

All of this amounts to an unprecedented level of scrutiny and support for the social care system, and a level of integration with the NHS that is long overdue.

Second Mr Speaker, the 4 UK Chief Medical Officers have today updated the case definition to include a new symptom.

Throughout this pandemic, we've said that if you develop a new, continuous cough or a fever then you should immediately self-isolate.

From today we are including anosmia, which means that if you've lost your sense of smell or are experiencing a change in your normal sense of smell or taste, that can be a symptom of coronavirus, even where the other symptoms are not present.

So from today, if you develop a continuous cough or fever or anosmia, you should immediately self-isolate for at least 7 days, in line with the guidelines.

Members of your household should self-isolate for 14 days.

By updating the case definition in line with the latest science, we can more easily recognise the presence of the virus and more effectively fight it.

Third Mr Speaker, we are expanding eligibility for testing further than ever before.

Over the past 6 weeks, this country has taken a small, specialised diagnostics industry and scaled it, at breath-taking pace, into a global champion.

Yesterday Mr Speaker we conducted 100,678 tests.

Every day we are creating more capacity. That means more people can be tested and the virus has fewer places to hide.

Today I can announce to the House that everyone aged 5 and over with symptoms is now eligible for a test.

That applies right across the UK in all 4 nations from now.

Anyone with a new continuous cough, a high temperature or the loss or change of sense of taste or smell can book a test by visiting [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus).

If you're eligible for a test and you don't have internet access you can call 119 in England, Wales and Scotland, or 0300 303 2713 if you're in Northern Ireland.

We will continue to prioritise access to tests for NHS and social care, patients, residents and staff and as testing ramps up towards our new goal of total capacity for 200,000 tests a day, ever more people will have the confidence and certainty that comes with an accurate test result.

Fourth, Mr Speaker I want to update the House on building our army of contact tracers.

Today I can confirm that we have recruited over 21,000 contact tracers in England.

This includes 7,500 healthcare professionals who will provide our call handlers with expert clinical advice.

They will help manually trace the contacts of anyone who has had a positive

test and advise on them on whether they need to isolate.

They have received rigorous training, with detailed procedures designed by our experts at Public Health England.

Mr Speaker, they have stepped up to serve their country in its hour of need and I want to thank them in advance for the life-saving work that they're about to do.

The work of these 21,000 will be supported by the NHS COVID-19 app, which we are piloting on the Isle of Wight at the moment and will then roll out across the country.

Taken together, this means that we now have the elements we need to roll out our national Test and Trace service – the testing capacity, the tracing capability and the technology.

Building that system is incredibly important, but so too are the basics.

We need everyone, everyone, to self-isolate if they have or if someone in their household has symptoms.

And we need everyone to keep washing their hands and following the social distancing rules.

We need everyone to stay alert because this is a national effort and everyone has a part to play.

The goal is to protect life and allow us, carefully and cautiously, to get back to doing more of the things that make life worth living.

That is our goal, we are making progress towards it, and I commend this statement to the House.

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## [Funding supports North Ayrshire communities](#)

News story

Magnox and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority have announced a £25,000 cash boost to help support vulnerable groups in North Ayrshire.



Volunteers from the North Ayrshire foodbank

The money has been granted to North Ayrshire Council to support the community during the coronavirus pandemic.

The council plans to invest the money into both North Ayrshire and Largs foodbanks towards food stock, PPE for volunteers and delivery costs.

The funding forms part of the 12 grants, worth £300,000 in total, Magnox has made available to local authorities or charities where a Magnox site is located.

Gwen Parry-Jones, Magnox Chief Executive, said:

Many community groups are carrying out positive work, supporting the most vulnerable in their areas. This work is vital, and a key part of Magnox's response to COVID-19 is to help other organisations deal with the pandemic wherever we can.

In this time of national crisis, Magnox has agreed with the NDA that we should make available up to £25,000 at each site from the Magnox Socio-economic Scheme for use by local community groups on COVID-19 related activities. Magnox is committed to assisting the communities surrounding our sites, as our communities have supported us for over 50 years, and we hope this funding will go some way to supporting the essential work being delivered.

Councillor Louise McPhater, North Ayrshire Council's Cabinet Member for Communities, said: "On behalf of everyone at North Ayrshire Council, I would like to whole-heartedly thank Magnox for their generous donation. "We have arrangements in place in every locality to ensure emergency community food provision is available – free of charge – for those who need it.

"This significant Magnox donation will go some way in ensuring that we have sufficient foodbank stock ready as we continue to keep our volunteers, foodbank and community hub staff safe as they continue to provide a lifeline service to some of the most vulnerable residents in our communities.

"I have seen first-hand the work carried out by the foodbank and their

volunteers over the last few weeks who are doing such a fantastic job in very challenging circumstances and I can't praise them highly enough."

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## **Patients informed to exchange Emerade 500 micrograms adrenaline pens for a different brand**

Allergy patients who carry Emerade 500 microgram adrenaline auto-injector pens should contact their prescriber and seek replacement pens of a different brand.

Healthcare professionals are being asked to contact patients who use Emerade 500 microgram pens following notification by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Patients and/or carers should return all Emerade 500 micrograms auto-injectors to their local pharmacy once they have obtained a prescription for, and been supplied with, an alternative brand.

The recall is due to reports of difficulty in activating the pens, meaning the dose of adrenaline may not be delivered when needed by a patient for a severe, acute allergic reaction (anaphylaxis). Most of the pens will still activate, but more force may need to be applied.

The recall of Emerade 500 microgram auto-injectors follows the previous recalls of Emerade 150 and 300 microgram auto-injectors. More information on the previous alerts can be found on the following links: [150mcg recall](#) and [300 mcg recall](#).

The pens were recalled in three phases to ensure there would be enough supplies of the alternative pens, EpiPen or Jext, available for patients.

Alternative brands of adrenaline auto-injector (EpiPen and Jext) are available in a maximum strength of 300 micrograms.

There are data to show that a single EpiPen (300 microgram) or Jext (300 microgram) pen will be a suitable replacement for a single Emerade 500 microgram pen.

This is based on recently available results from a study that compared blood levels of adrenaline following EpiPen 300 micrograms or Jext 300 micrograms with that following Emerade 500 micrograms. Patients should always carry two pens.

A MHRA spokesperson, said:

Action has been taken to protect patients, following detection of a fault in one component of the Emerade adrenaline auto-injector pens.

Patients should return all Emerade 500 microgram pens to their local pharmacy once they have a new prescription and have been supplied with pens of an alternative brand.

It is vital that patients follow existing advice to carry two pens with them at all times and to contact their doctor when a replacement is due.

When switching to a different brand of adrenaline pen the patient must ensure they are familiar with how to use the pen as each brand is administered differently.

Given the current COVID-19 pandemic, the MHRA in line with NHS guidance, is urging patients who need to return auto-injector pens to minimise additional burden on healthcare professionals and heed the advice on social distancing.

- a patient or carer should make a telephone appointment with their doctor to request a prescription for replacement pens of a different brand. Unless their doctor advises otherwise, they should not visit the GP surgery in person
- request the prescription is sent to a pharmacy to avoid collecting in-person from the surgery
- if a patient and/or their household is self-isolating, ask a friend or relative to collect the replacement pens from the pharmacy. Some pharmacies offer a home delivery service
- once the patient has the replacement auto-injector pens return Emerade 500 mcg pens to the pharmacy. Some pharmacies have drop-off boxes to facilitate distancing.

At present, healthcare professionals are unlikely to be able to help with face to face training but there may be opportunities for remote consultations. Patients must take particular care to read the instructions on how to use the pen which are in the leaflet contained in the box.

The manufacturers' websites for each brand of pen have information and training videos on how to use the auto-injector.

Trainer pens can be obtained from the manufacturer and patients are strongly urged to get these so they can practise with the new device.

If an Emerade pen does need to be used before a patient is able to obtain an alternative pen, it should be pressed very firmly against the thigh. If this does not result in activation, the patient should immediately use their second pen.

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## [DVLA opening hours: spring bank holiday 2020](#)

News story

DVLA's contact centre opening times, for critical workers only, over the spring bank holiday.



DVLA's contact centre will be closed on Monday 25 May 2020 because of a bank holiday.

Our full opening hours for critical workers only over the bank holiday weekend are:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Opening hours</b>
Friday 22 May	8am to 1pm, and 2pm to 7pm
Saturday 23 May	closed
Sunday 24 May	closed
Monday 25 May	closed
Tuesday 26 May	8am to 1pm, and 2pm to 7pm

Please do not call us unless you have an urgent query and are a critical

worker directly involved in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. [Critical workers can contact us here](#).

All customers can use [our online services](#) throughout the bank holiday and beyond. Please do not send in any paper applications until further notice.

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1. 18 May 2020

Added translation

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## [UK company delivers over 40,000 PCR test kits to Egypt](#)

World news story

Leading UK company, Primer Design Ltd, a subsidiary of Novacyt SA has exported over 40,000 PCR test kits to Egypt to support its response to COVID-19



The UK and Egyptian government have been working hard to address the immediate medical needs of both countries by keeping essential trade flowing. In April, Egypt fulfilled an export agreement with the UK, sending shipments of medical gowns to support the UK.

British Ambassador to Egypt, Sir Geoffrey Adams said:

Egypt and the UK are committed to working together to tackle this

global challenge. The UK government and British businesses are united in their commitment to support Egypt. That means protecting Egyptians from the impact of the virus, providing for the most vulnerable, and where possible using the crisis to make progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development goals.

On 4 May, the UK co-hosted the Global Response Summit and raised USD8bn in pledges to combat COVID-19. The UK is also leading the way to make coronavirus vaccines and treatments available to all. On 4 June, the UK will host a virtual summit that aims to boost the global supply of a vaccine once one is approved for use, to help prevent a second wave of the pandemic.

The UK is the G7 lead on support to vulnerable countries, and has confirmed a responsive funding package of more than GBP700m, including a GBP130m contribution to the UN, GBP65m of which is allocated to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

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