

Show your vehicle some TLC in lockdown

This follows a new survey of the nation's drivers, revealing more than half (54%) did not know when their next service is due.

Nearly a third (32%) of road users admit they only carry out basic vehicle maintenance, such as checking their tyre pressure or oil levels, at best every few months or never. This is in spite of advice to perform regular vehicle maintenance – even when a vehicle is not in regular use during lockdown – on top of the recommended annual service and mandatory MOT.

People must stay at home during the lockdown except for the permitted reasons, but carrying out regular maintenance and checks will ensure vehicles are in good condition for when drivers are able to hit the road again.

In response to the survey, Highways England and partners – breakdown provider, Green Flag, and retailer, Halfords – are today spotlighting the importance of basic maintenance and checks in helping road users to avoid breakdowns or endangering themselves and other drivers. Without proper care and attention during lockdown, owners risk tyre problems, flat batteries, weather damage and issues due to fluid levels running low when they begin using their vehicle again.

Jeremy Phillips, head of road user safety, said:

While the country is still in lockdown, we want to remind drivers to act now and carry out those important basic checks. Doing regular maintenance, rather than waiting until the end of lockdown is in sight, will ensure their vehicles still work and preventable breakdowns are avoided when restrictions are lifted and the nation gets back on the road.

With the support of partners, Halfords and Green Flag, Highways England is committed to explaining the importance of carrying out vehicle checks even though drivers are restricted to essential travel only. A vehicle's condition can change while not in use.

Every year Highways England's traffic officers deal with more than 85,000 breakdowns – 40 per cent caused by vehicles running out of fuel, poor tyre maintenance, power loss and engine trouble. These basic checks and maintenance can prevent many breakdowns.

- Check tyres – check your tyre pressures are suitable for the load and their condition, including the spare. Always look out for cuts or wear and make sure tyres have a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm.
- Check fuel – before every journey, check your fuel levels and make sure you have enough to get to your destination. Always keep your tank at least one quarter full.
- Check engine oil – use your dipstick to check oil regularly. Top up if

needed. Take your car to a garage if filling more than usual.

- Check screen wash – check your water is within the minimum and maximum markings. Always keep screen wash topped up so you can clear debris or dirt off your windscreen.
- Check lights – look at whether indicators, hazard lights, headlights, fog lights, reverse lights and brake lights are functioning properly.

Highways England has prepared a [written guide](#) showing road users how to carry out the five most important vehicle checks: tyres, engine oil, water, lights and fuel. Knowing the benefits of regular checks and maintenance before getting on the road is key to travelling safely.

Mark Newberry, commercial director at Green Flag, said:

Cars are designed to be driven regularly and the components rely on regular use to stay in tip-top condition. A period of lockdown means many vehicles that may have been running every day could now be used less, which can lead to a number of complications.

Car batteries are often the hardest hit. During the first lockdown, over 60% of our callouts were for battery-related issues and the colder weather will also have an impact by reducing the battery's ability to hold charge.

Carry out a few basic checks to make sure your car is ready for when you need it. Don't leave it until your next MOT or service if you know or feel there is something wrong with your car. Although we will be there to recover you at the roadside – no-one wants to break down, especially in the cold dark winter months.

A Halfords spokesperson said:

At this time of year, colder weather and snowy spells introduce additional risks that all motorists should be guarding against. With the ongoing lockdown many of us will be using our cars less right now, and problems can often occur when vehicles are left unused on our drives. So, it's more important than ever to make checks every time you're setting off on those essential journeys.

Halfords is open as an essential retailer to help keep Britain moving, and we offer a free 5-point car check at our stores and garages nationwide. Our trained staff will check your lights, wipers, battery, windscreen and MOT status so you can be sure you're on the road safely, or have the Halfords team fix it for you if not.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[GARDP welcomes additional funding from UK to develop new treatment for gonorrhoea](#)

This investment, on top of £3.5 million committed in 2019, will support the Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership (GARDP) in the development and availability of zoliflodacin, a novel antibiotic, which is currently being assessed as part of a global phase 3 trial for safety and effectiveness as a treatment for gonorrhoea.

This new antibiotic has the potential to treat drug resistant gonorrhoea and is one of the few antibiotics in development specifically for the disease, an important consideration to ensure the treatment remains effective for generations to come.

Lord Bethell, Minister for Innovation, said:

Our investment to develop one of the few antibiotics to treat gonorrhoea shows our commitment to deliver medicines today which will change lives tomorrow. Supporting the fantastic work of GARDP shows our commitment to drive forward global health goals and cements the UK's place at the forefront of the fight against antimicrobial resistance.

Seamus O'Brien, GARDP Director of Research and Development, said:

We thank the UK for their increased contribution to GARDP and our work to develop a new treatment for gonorrhoea that is available to every person who needs it. Their support for our STI programme is critical for preventing the dire scenario of untreatable gonorrhoea and for the successful control of this infection.

Gonorrhoea is among the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs), with an estimated 87 million new cases occurring globally every year, and has been identified as posing a significant threat to global health by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Resistance to recommended treatments for gonorrhoea has emerged globally, including in the UK. Addressing drug-resistant infections is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly goal 3 to ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all. There is now an urgent need for new treatment options, particularly for people in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), who are hit hardest by the burden of this disease. GARDP will develop a strategy for access and appropriate use within LMICs that have a high number of cases of gonorrhoea.

Gonorrhoea can have severe consequences on public health and, when left untreated, serious consequences for reproductive health as well as increased risk of transmission of HIV and other STIs. Women and vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected.

About the Global AMR Innovation Fund (GAMRIF)

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) is the UK government department which is responsible for helping people to live more independent, healthier lives for longer. The partnership with GARDP is part of DHSC's [Global Antimicrobial Resistance Innovation Fund \(GAMRIF\)](#).

GAMRIF was established to provide seed funding for innovative research and development, specifically in neglected and underinvested areas, in the field of AMR. GAMRIF is a £50 million UK Aid investment, which means all projects funded must support research primarily and directly for the benefit of people in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

The fund takes a 'One Health' approach, seeking to invest in potential solutions to reduce the threat of AMR in humans, animals, fish and the environment. The fund seeks to leverage additional global funding through interaction with international government bodies, public-private partnerships, product development partnerships, global funding mechanisms and global fora.

About GARDP

The Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership (GARDP) is a Swiss not-for-profit organisation developing new treatments for drug-resistant infections that pose the greatest threat to health.

GARDP was created by the WHO and the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) in 2016 to ensure that everyone who needs antibiotics receives effective and affordable treatment. It aims to develop 5 new treatments by 2025 to fight drug-resistant infections.

GARDP is funded by the governments of Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, South Africa, Switzerland, United Kingdom, as well as Médecins

Sans Frontières and private foundations. GARDP is registered under the legal name GARDP Foundation.

[Form: Green social prescribing: call for expressions of interest](#)

Expressions of interest for a project which aims to improve people's mental health through green social prescribing.

[New Chair of the Commission on Human Medicines](#)

Press release

Professor Sir Munir Pirmohamed has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care as Chair of the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM).



The CHM provides independent expert advice to ministers on the safety, quality and efficacy of medicines. It is an advisory non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Care.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

I am pleased to confirm Professor Sir Munir Pirmohamed as Chair of the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM).

He provides a wealth of clinical experience and expertise in pharmacology, genetics and the safety of medicines. He will lead the CHM at a time when its role and profile continues to be critically important in its independent and scientific assessments of the safety, quality and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines, as well as all other vaccines and medicines, to protect public health.

Professor Sir Munir Pirmohamed said:

I am delighted to be appointed Chair of the CHM. The Commission is widely respected internationally for its work in licensing new medicines and monitoring their safety. Patient and public safety remains at the forefront of our work and I will make sure that the vital role we play in ensuring the medicines we take continue to meet the highest standards of safety, quality and efficacy.

Professor Sir Munir Pirmohamed is a clinical pharmacologist and geneticist who currently holds the David Weatherall Chair in Medicine at the University of Liverpool and is a Consultant Physician at Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Sir Munir holds the only NHS Chair of Pharmacogenetics in the UK, is Director of the Medical Research Council Centre for Drug Safety Sciences and Director of the Wolfson Centre for Personalised Medicine. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences and was until recently a CHM Commissioner and Vice Chair.

Notes to Editor

- Professor Sir Munir Pirmohamed has been appointed as Chair of the Commission on Human Medicines for 4 years from 12 February 2021. He replaces Professor Stuart Ralston whose appointment ended on 11 February 2021.
- This appointment is made in accordance with the Cabinet Office Code of Governance for Public Appointments. The regulation of public appointments against the requirements of this Code is carried out by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.
- The appointments are made on merit and political activity played no part in the decision process. However, in accordance with the Code, there is a requirement for appointees' political activity (if any declared) to be made public. Sir Munir has not declared any political activity.
- The appointment will involve a time commitment of 33 days per year, including 11 meetings and any ad-hoc meetings based on need. Remuneration for the role will be up to £500 for the preparation required and attendance at each meeting.
- Professor Sir Munir Pirmohamed will continue in his role as chair of the CHM's COVID-19 Vaccines Benefit Risk Expert Working Group.
- [More information on the Commission for Human Medicines.](#)

New UK Government Covid testing site opens in Kirkcaldy

The UK Government has today, Friday 12 February, opened a new walk-through coronavirus testing centre at Overton Community Centre in Kirkcaldy (KY1 3JP).

The test centre is part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history. In Scotland, this comprises of seven drive-through sites, 30 walk-through sites, 35 mobile units, plus the Glasgow Lighthouse Lab which is working round the clock to process samples.

In Scotland, the UK Government is providing all Covid testing and test processing outside of the NHS. Around two thirds of all daily tests are provided by the UK Government, in support of Scotland's health services.

Tests must be booked in advance at [NHS Inform](#) or by calling 0800 028 2816. People should only book at test if they have coronavirus symptoms (a high temperature, a new and continuous cough, or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste).

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

To respond to the coronavirus, we have built a major testing and tracing system from scratch. We are constantly working to expand and improve it with new technologies and innovations so everyone with symptoms can get a test.

New walk-in sites like this one makes it even easier to get a test no matter where you live. If you have symptoms of coronavirus, I urge you to book a test today and follow the advice of NHS Test and Protect if you are contacted to protect others and stop the spread of the virus.

Baroness Dido Harding, Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection, said:

Walk-through sites offer communities better access to coronavirus testing, so everyone with symptoms can get a test. This new site is part of our ongoing work to expand our testing network across the UK which now has the capacity to process more than 700,000 tests a day. We will continue to expand capacity to improve test turnaround times and push forward testing innovations to make sure anyone who needs a test can get one.

Please book a test if you have coronavirus symptoms: a new continuous cough, a high temperature and a loss or change in sense of smell or taste, and follow the advice of NHS Test and Protect if you are contacted.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart said

The UK Government is doing everything it can to support people in all parts of the UK through the pandemic.

Testing continues to play an important role how we manage the virus alongside the roll out of vaccines, helping to identify local outbreaks, slow down the rate of transmission and protect communities. I would like to thank the public for continuing to do the right thing and come forward to be tested when they display symptoms.

The UK Government continues to provide the bulk of testing in Scotland, with this new walk-through centre in Kirkcaldy just the latest in our extensive network. We have also secured and paid for millions of doses of the Pfizer and Oxford vaccines for all parts of the UK.

Hope is on the horizon, but we can't let up on our efforts to contain the virus.

NHS Fife Deputy Director of Public Health, Dr Esther Curnock, said:

Testing is vital in helping us to identify those who have contracted COVID-19, enabling us to break the chains of transmission by preventing from people from passing the virus on to others.

The new UK Government site in Kirkcaldy is part of a growing network of testing facilities in Fife and will improve access for local people with symptoms of COVID-19.

It remains crucial that anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, regardless of how mild, isolates immediately and arranges to get tested as soon as possible.

Simon Venn, Mitie Chief Government & Strategy Officer, said:

Our priority during the pandemic is to support the nation's efforts to fight COVID-19 and help keep the country running. Testing is a critical part of the UK's strategy to combat coronavirus and we're proud to support the UK Government with this vital task. A big thank you to all the NHS staff, Mitie employees and other frontline

heroes in Fife, who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe.