

Shielding advice for the clinically extremely vulnerable to stop from April

- Advice to the clinically extremely vulnerable to shield ceases from Thursday 1 April, as virus infection rates continue to fall
- People on shielded patient list will receive letters from today with updated guidance on steps people can take to reduce their risk
- More than 9 in 10 clinically extremely vulnerable people have been vaccinated with a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine

In line with the government's [COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021](#) roadmap published last month, those on the shielded patient list can begin to follow the national restrictions alongside the rest of the population, but are still advised to take extra precautions to keep themselves safe from COVID-19.

Letters to patients with updated guidance will be arriving from today and over the next 2 weeks. These set out practical steps people can follow to reduce their risk of catching the virus, including continuing to maintain strict social distancing and to keep their overall social contacts at low levels, such as working from home where possible.

The move follows the steady decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalisations across the country for the last couple of weeks.

Senior clinicians, including the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, Dr Jenny Harries, have recommended that shielding advice is paused nationally from 1 April onwards, as supported by the latest scientific evidence and advice.

With the success of the UK's COVID-19 vaccination programme, more than 9 in 10 clinically extremely vulnerable people are now vaccinated with their first dose, but it's still important people continue to follow the national rules and take the additional precautions set out in the guidance to keep themselves as protected as possible.

Local councils and supermarkets will continue to provide support for those shielding until 31 March. If people have already registered for priority access to supermarket delivery slots, they will continue to be able to access these until 21 June 2021.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, Dr Jenny Harries, said:

Shielding has always been an advisory measure to safeguard those who are the most clinically vulnerable in our communities. We recognise how difficult this period has been for so many and the impact it has had on people's wellbeing.

With the prevalence of the virus in the community continuing to decrease now is the right time for people to start thinking about easing up on these more rigid guidelines.

If you have been shielding, we strongly urge you to take extra precautions following 1 April to keep yourself as safe as possible, such as continuing to observe social distancing and working from home.

We will continue to monitor all of the evidence and adjust this advice should there be any changes in infection rates.

People are still advised to continue working from home where possible, but if people are unable to do so, employers are required by law to take steps to make workplaces COVID-19 secure and should discuss this with their employees.

In February 2021, the government announced a new predictive risk model that helps clinicians identify additional people who may be at higher cumulative risk from COVID-19 due to the combination of their underlying risk factors.

Up to 1.7 million vulnerable individuals were identified by the tool, taking the total number of people in the shielded patient list up to 3.79 million people, as of 6 March 2021. As a result, over 800,000 more adults have been prioritised to receive a vaccine that weren't already in the top four priority groups for phase one of vaccinations.

Updated guidance will be published on GOV.UK.

[Read more about the COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021.](#)

[Figures on those on the shielded patient list are published by NHS Digital.](#)

If you are aged 16 or older and have been advised you are clinically extremely vulnerable, you should already have been offered your first dose of the vaccine. If you have not yet received your first dose, please contact your GP.

If you have received your first dose, you should still ensure you take up your second dose of the vaccine when it is offered to you. Having 2 doses should further increase your level of protection.

No vaccine is 100% effective and therefore even if you have had both doses, there is still no absolute guarantee that you will not become ill from COVID-19. Therefore, you should continue to take the extra precautions set out in this guidance to help protect yourself.

See the [latest vaccination statistics](#).