

Person struck at Gravel Hill tram stop, Croydon

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

Government begins large-scale virus infection and antibody test study

- Major long-term study will track spread of COVID-19 in general population
- Study will include antibody testing to help understand levels of immunity
- Up to 300,000 people to take part over 12 months

The study will help improve understanding around the current rate of infection and how many people are likely to have developed antibodies to the virus.

Participants in the study will form a representative sample of the entire UK population by age and geography. The results will help scientists and the government in the ongoing response to the coronavirus outbreak, with initial findings expected to be available in early May.

Led by the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the study draws on the world-leading scientific expertise of the University of Oxford, backed by the proven testing capabilities of data science company IQVIA UK and the National Biosample Centre in Milton Keynes.

The flagship study forms part of Pillar 4 of the [government's COVID-19 testing strategy](#), to conduct UK-wide surveillance testing to learn more about the spread of the disease and help inform the development of new tests and treatments. It will add to the population data already being collected through the national surveillance programme operated by Public Health England, which has been enhanced since the end of February.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

“Understanding more about the rate of COVID-19 infection in the general population, and the longer-term prevalence of antibodies, is a vital part of our ongoing response to this virus.

“This survey will help to track the current extent of transmission and infection in the UK, while also answering crucial questions about immunity as we continue to build up our understanding of this new virus.

“Together, these results will help us better understand the spread of the virus to date, predict the future trajectory and inform future action we take, including crucially the development of ground-breaking new tests and treatments.”

Participants will provide samples taken from self-administered nose and throat swabs and answer a few short questions during a home visit by a trained health worker. The swab tests will show whether or not participants currently have the virus. They will be asked to take further tests every week for the first 5 weeks, then every month for 12 months.

In total, 25,000 people will take part in the pilot phase of the survey, with plans to extend it to up to around 300,000 over the next 12 months.

Adults from around 1,000 households will also provide a blood sample taken by a trained nurse, phlebotomist or healthcare assistant. These tests will help determine what proportion of the population has developed antibodies to COVID-19. Participants will be asked to give further samples monthly for the next 12 months.

Swabs will be taken from all participating households, whether their members are reporting symptoms or not. Blood will not be taken in any households where someone has symptoms of COVID-19 or is currently self-isolating or shielding.

The trained study health workers will use all the recommended precautions to protect themselves and everyone in the household from getting the virus. Swab test results will be communicated back to participants by their GPs and confidentiality will be protected throughout the process.

National Statistician Sir Ian Diamond said:

“The Office for National Statistics has huge experience in running very large household surveys that gather vital information from a genuinely representative sample of the entire population. In this case we’ll be using that capability to help our health expert colleagues to create a reliable picture of the scale of COVID-19 infection and antibody development that will inform the key decisions that lie ahead in this pandemic.”

Professor Sarah Walker of University of Oxford Nuffield Department of Medicine said:

“This is one of the largest and most important studies underway into the COVID-19 virus and will transform our understanding of the infection. The University of Oxford is delighted to be the study sponsor.”

Tim Sheppard of IQVIA UK said:

“IQVIA is proud to be playing our part in helping to understand COVID-19 – the greatest public health challenge that has faced the world in a generation.

“Our nursing team has 30 years’ experience of working with the NHS to support patient care. This population study is vital, time-critical work, and is another part of our global mission to better understand COVID-19 and change the course of this pandemic.”

1. Potential volunteers are being selected from a group who have already taken part in ONS surveys and have expressly consented to be contacted about further research.
2. To minimise the burden on NHS resources and personnel, tests will be undertaken by the IQVIA nurses in participants’ own homes. By mobilising a dedicated nationwide team of IQVIA nurses to undertake the COVID-19 tests in the community, we are helping to ensure that frontline NHS staff can continue to focus on providing care for those who need it.
3. The de-identified blood samples will be sent to Oxford University, the study sponsor, for antibody testing while swabs for infection testing will be sent to UK Biocentre.
4. Funding for the survey is being provided by DHSC. While the pilot phase will take place in England only, it will be extended to other parts of the UK in due course.

[HM Treasury announces revision to the UK Debt Management Office’s financing remit 2020-21](#)

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CMA gives Just Eat and Takeaway.com deal the green light

Just Eat plc (Just Eat) is one of the main food delivery firms in the UK market, while Takeaway.com N.V (Takeaway.com) operates in 11 countries overseas, including the Netherlands and Germany, but has not been active in the UK since exiting in 2016. Both companies' platforms link customers to hundreds of restaurants or food outlets, where they can browse takeaway options and order online.

As part of its investigation, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) considered information suggesting that Takeaway.com might have been well-placed to re-enter the UK market and compete with Just Eat, had the merger not gone ahead.

As there are only a small number of companies that act as the middle-man between restaurants and customers, re-entry by Takeaway.com could have given UK customers more choice – and possibly better value for money or quality of service – when deciding what to order.

However, after carefully investigating these concerns and scrutinising large volumes of the two companies' own internal business documents, the CMA is satisfied that there is not a material likelihood that Takeaway.com would have re-entered the UK in the future, had the merger not gone ahead.

Colin Raftery, Senior Director of Mergers at the CMA, said:

After interrogating how this deal is likely to affect the UK market, we are satisfied that there are no competition concerns.

Millions of people in the UK use online food platforms for takeaways and, where a merger could raise competition concerns, we have a duty to rigorously investigate whether customers could lose out. In this case, we carefully considered whether Takeaway.com could have re-entered the UK market in future, giving people more choice. It was important we investigated this properly, but after gathering additional evidence which indicates this deal will not reduce competition, it is also the right decision to now clear the merger.

During the Covid-19 outbreak, the CMA is working with businesses where it can to be flexible – for example, by recognising that there may be delays in providing the information it needs to conduct investigations. However, it is also trying to complete investigations efficiently at this time, wherever possible, to provide businesses with certainty. In this case, the CMA was able to publish its final decision 26 days ahead of the statutory deadline.

For more information, visit the [Takeaway.com N.V. / Just Eat plc merger](#)

[inquiry](#) web page.

For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.

Digital minister urges parents to follow new guidance to keep children safe online during lockdown

With more people than ever working from home and many children using the internet for education and entertainment, there are increased risks of exposure to online harms such as cyberbullying and disinformation.

To combat this, today's guidance sets out a four-point plan and recommends reviewing security and safety settings, checking facts and guarding against disinformation, being vigilant against fraud and scams, and managing the amount of time spent online.

It follows a virtual roundtable held yesterday (Wednesday 22 April) by the Minister for Digital and Culture, Caroline Dinenage, the Security Minister, James Brokenshire, and child safety organisations to assess the impact of coronavirus on child online safety and bolster ways of working together to protect children online.

Minister for Digital and Culture Caroline Dinenage said:

Staying at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives means we are spending more time online. This means we must all be extra vigilant, follow good security practice and make sure our children are safe too. It's also important that we check the facts behind what we read and remember to take regular breaks.

We are completely committed to making the UK the safest place to be online, and that's why we have brought together a wealth of practical advice which I urge parents to use and share with their children.

Security Minister James Brokenshire said:

The safety of children online is of the upmost importance. That's why our law enforcement continue to pursue predators and bring them to justice.

We also want to empower adults to use all the guidance and advice available to help them keep children safe from all forms of online harms, including child sexual abuse.

As well as offering advice on security settings, fact-checking and protecting against fraud, the new guidance encourages people to consider the impact screen use is having on their wellbeing.

With more parents looking after and educating children from home, the guidance has tailored advice for parents to keep their children safe online.

This includes using parental controls to manage what children can access, switching on family filters to protect children from inappropriate content, and having conversations with children to encourage them to speak to a trusted adult if they come across anything online that makes them uncomfortable.

UK Safer Internet Centre Director and Childnet CEO, Will Gardner, said:

Technology has proved to be enormously important in these unprecedented times. We know that children are benefitting hugely from being connected, but we also know it's even more important that we take steps to keep them safe and happy whilst online.

That's why we welcome guidance which brings together practical and simple advice for families in this difficult period.

The government continues to develop legislation to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online, and will introduce this once Parliamentary time allows.

In February the government announced it was minded to appoint communications watchdog Ofcom as the regulator to enforce a statutory duty of care to protect users from harmful content.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- The guidance can be found at:
www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-staying-safe-online
- The guidance points to a number of existing resources from organisations such as Full Fact for checking claims about COVID-19, safety advice from the National Crime Agency, Internet Matters, the UK Safer Internet Centre and Childline, as well as tools for managing family screen time, such as Apple's Screen Time feature and Google's Family Link.

- The following organisations attended a virtual roundtable co-hosted by the Minister for Digital and Culture and the Security Minister to discuss online safety during Covid-19: Barnardo's, Internet Watch Foundation, NSPCC, ParentZone, Samaritans, UK Safer Internet Centre