

Coronavirus (COVID-19) – information for children, young people and families

We understand that you might be worried about coronavirus – also known as COVID-19 – particularly if your child has a long-term health condition. This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) sets out our advice and the action we are taking to respond to the coronavirus outbreak. You can find [guidance for specific patient groups here](#). Visit gosh.nhs.uk/staysafe to meet Otto the Octopus and find out how you can help reduce the spread of infection, whether you're out and about or visiting GOSH.

As we're regularly updating this guidance, if you'd like to share it please link directly to gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-FAQ, rather than quoting or summarising what we've said.

We are following official guidance from the NHS, UK Government and World Health Organisation. The situation is changing constantly so we will update this information as needed – you can always check the GOV.UK website at www.gov.uk/coronavirus for up-to-the-minute advice.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

A: This is a virus that affects the lungs and therefore people's breathing.

Q: What are the symptoms?

A: The main symptoms are:

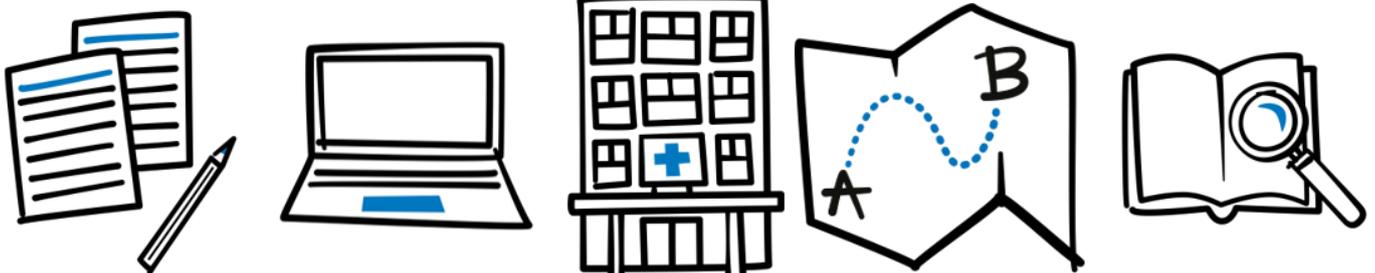
- New, continuous cough
- High temperature
- Loss of or change to your sense of smell or taste

However, these are similar to lots of other common illnesses. The only way you can be sure if someone has coronavirus is to test them. Read more about symptoms of COVID-19 at nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/.

If you, your child or anyone else in your household has symptoms of COVID-19, please do not visit your doctor or pharmacist – stay at home and use the NHS 111 online service at 111.nhs.uk for urgent medical advice.

However, if you are worried about your child or feel their life is at risk, you should call 999 or go to your local A&E or urgent care centre as you normally would.

If you are due to attend GOSH and you or your child has symptoms of COVID-19, please call their speciality team for advice and support before visiting the hospital.



Q: Does COVID-19 affect children?

A: The evidence to date suggests that although children do develop COVID-19, very few children develop severe symptoms, even if they have an underlying health condition.

At GOSH, we are taking extra precautions to keep our patients safe, like changing the way we run some of our services and providing [specialty guidance](#) for patients, including those who may be considered immunocompromised or part of a vulnerable group.

Q: What about this new strain of COVID-19? Should I be worried about this?

A: All viruses have the ability to 'mutate' or change over time, and the COVID-19 virus is no different. A new variant of the COVID-19 strain has been identified as part of the routine surveillance which is carried out by Public Health England. It is normal for a virus to mutate in order to better adapt to infecting people, which is what this virus has done. It is more efficient at causing infection, which is what is meant when you hear talk of it being more transmissible or infectious. All viruses have the capability to adapt in this way, and this is something which was expected. It does not cause more severe disease, but it will infect more people.

However, we know that our current ways of reducing its spread – Hands, Face, Space – are effective in reducing transmission, so everyone should carry on using hand sanitiser, wearing a face mask, and staying 2 metres from people outside their household. We're also pretty sure that the vaccines will work against this strain of the virus.

Q. Should I be worried about 'multisystem inflammatory syndrome', or symptoms of fever and abdominal pain?

A: If your child has symptoms including a fever, diarrhoea and abdominal pain, call NHS 111 or access the service online at 111.nhs.uk. If you're very worried about your child, please call 999 or take them to A&E or an urgent care centre as you

normally would. They are open for all children who need care and are safe to attend.

You may have seen reports in the media of very unwell children being admitted to hospital with an inflammatory syndrome characterised by symptoms including fever, abdominal pain, diarrhoea and skin rashes. These symptoms have been compared to a separate condition called Kawasaki disease.

This inflammatory syndrome is affecting only a small number of children, but it's really important that if you do have concerns about your child, you seek urgent treatment. We will continue to follow the latest understanding of this syndrome to make sure we can best care for these patients. Information about PIMS-TS is available at www.gosh.nhs.uk/conditions-and-treatments/conditions-we-treat/paediatric-inflammatory-multisystem-syndrome-pims.

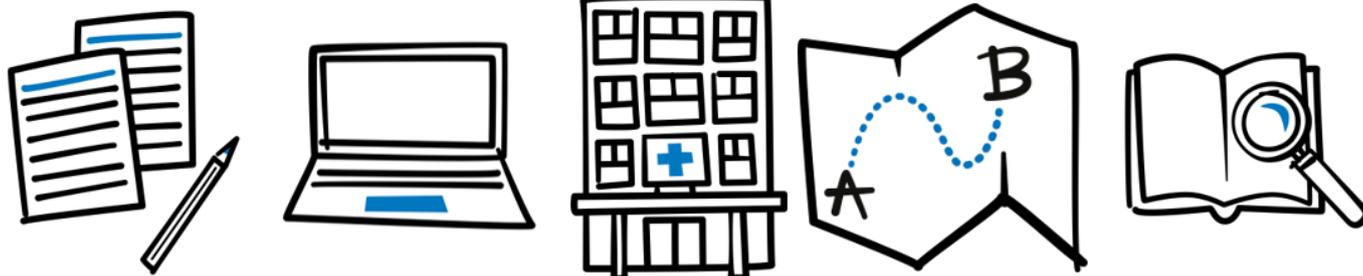
Q: As England is subject to a lockdown currently, are GOSH still admitting patients?

A: GOSH continues to be open and safe to support our patients and families. However, as we're in lockdown we may need to make some changes to appointments and admissions, but we will contact you directly if this affects you and your child.

We learnt a lot earlier last year about how helpful virtual appointments by telephone or video call can be, so we're likely to review our upcoming appointment to see which can be converted to a virtual appointment so you don't have to come to GOSH.

We may also have to alter some planned admissions but our clinical teams will always make sure that children and young people who need to continue to have their planned admission, treatment or operation can do so. Again, if this affects your child, we will contact you directly.

Read more about the impact of the lockdown on our services at GOSH [here](#).



Q: My child has a long-term health condition, what should I do?

A: Very few children are currently required to shield. You can find guidance for specific patient groups at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-specialty-guides. If you have any questions or concerns, please seek advice from the GOSH teams involved in your child's care. An easy and secure way to keep in touch is through the MyGOSH online portal. Find out more at gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh. Please also consult the latest NHS guidance at nhs.uk.

Q: What precautions should we take?

A: Everyone should also take the widely published precautions to avoid infection, including keeping good hand hygiene, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth. The public is also being advised to wear face coverings when it's hard to stay a safe distance from people, including on public transport and in hospitals. If you or your child wear one, please make sure you are able to wear it correctly. To see this advice in action and learn how to keep yourself and others safe, watch our family-friendly animation featuring Otto the Octopus at gosh.nhs.uk/staysafe.

Q: Should my child stop taking their medication if they develop COVID-19?

A: No, taking medication as prescribed is very important and not taking it could make your child's condition worse. Please consult your specialty team before making any decisions regarding your child's medication.

Q: What should I do if my child becomes unwell for reasons unrelated to COVID-19?

A: If there are changes to your child's underlying condition, please contact the GOSH teams involved in your child's care as you usually would.

An easy and secure way to do this is through the MyGOSH online portal at gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh. We are doing our best to respond to your queries quickly, but this might take a little longer than usual in some cases.

You can also call NHS 111 or visit 111.nhs.uk for medical advice, 24 hours a day. However, if you are worried about your child or feel their life is at risk, you should always call 999 or go to your local A&E or urgent care centre as you normally would.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) has produced [a helpful poster for parents and carers](#) who may be worried or unsure about what to do if their child is unwell or injured during the COVID-19 outbreak. Please note that the RCPCH poster provides general advice for all children. It doesn't take into account your child's specific condition or their personal health and care plan. If you have any questions, please seek advice from the GOSH teams involved in your child's care.

It is important to follow Government advice, but remember that NHS 111, GPs and hospitals are continuing to provide safe care should your family need it.

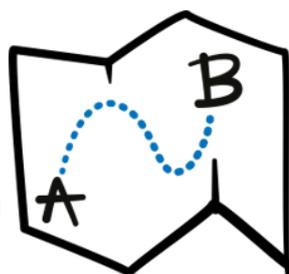
Q: Will my child's upcoming appointment or admission be cancelled?

A: If we do need to postpone your child's procedure, admission or appointment, we will contact you directly as soon as we can. We hope you understand that this might take a little longer than usual and we may not be able to give you details of the new appointment or admission date just now.

Q: My child's appointment or admission was postponed or cancelled. I'm worried the delay will affect their health.

A: We know delays to treatment can cause great anxiety, particularly when we might not be able to give you a new date for your appointment or admission.

Your child's health remains our number one priority. Our clinical teams are looking at every patient individually, and prioritising procedures, treatments and appointments for those who most need our care (in order of clinical priority).



We've found that virtual appointments are a great way of carrying out consultations when we can't bring your child into the hospital just yet.

We know how worrying delays can be and we are doing our best to minimise these while making sure we provide care safely and in line with advice from the Government.

If you have any questions or are worried about your visits to GOSH, get in touch with your clinical team through the MyGOSH online portal: gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh.

Q: My child has a confirmed appointment or admission coming up. What do we need to know before we arrive?

A: Our doctors and infection control specialists have been working together closely and listening carefully to national guidance to ensure we can provide your child with the care they need at GOSH safely.

If you are due to visit GOSH and you, or your child, is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or you think you may have come into close contact with someone affected, please call your child's speciality team for support before visiting the hospital. Please do not go to your GP or pharmacist – stay at home and use the NHS 111 online service at 111.nhs.uk for urgent medical advice.

If you are coming to GOSH, there are some guidelines and behaviours we're asking families to follow, both before your visit and while you're at the hospital. These are an important part of the measures we've put in place to keep everyone at the hospital – patients, families, and our staff – as safe as possible.

Before your visit, we recommend that you watch our family-friendly animation at gosh.nhs.uk/staysafe to meet Otto the Octopus and learn about the four ways you can help us reduce the spread of infection. This includes wearing a face mask at all times while you're at GOSH, unless you're at your child's bedside, or eating or drinking. Your child may also be asked to wear a mask when they move around the

hospital. This is in line with the latest national guidance.

We will provide masks for you and your child, but if your child isn't able to wear one, for example if they're very young, that's fine. When wearing a mask, make sure it covers your nose, mouth and chin. Try not to touch it while it's on. Take it off using the loops and clean your hands after you throw it away.

As a precaution during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are limiting visitors to the hospital. While we understand that this will be difficult for families, it is helping us greatly reduce the risk of infection, keeping you, your child and everyone else at GOSH safer.

- If your child has an outpatient appointment, only one carer will be allowed into the hospital. Unfortunately, siblings will not be able to visit.
- If your child is staying at GOSH overnight or longer, only one carer per family will be allowed into the hospital and stay overnight. Unfortunately, siblings will not be able to visit the hospital.

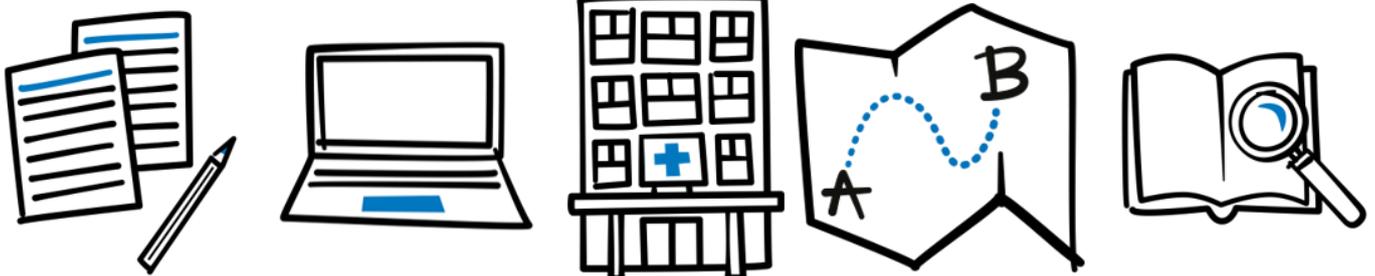
Our staff will keep a careful eye on waiting areas and wards, and may ask you to wait somewhere else if it's becoming difficult to keep everyone safely spaced.

If you feel it is critical for your child to be accompanied by additional carers, please contact your clinical team to discuss your child's needs directly.

If your child is likely to be staying at GOSH for 15 days or longer, you can nominate another carer to take over from you for the next 7 days, to make sure you get some rest. Speak to your clinical team to find out how this would work and what the nominated carer needs to know.

If your child is coming to GOSH for a planned admission, you can find everything you need to know before you arrive at gosh.nhs.uk/admissions-during-covid-19.

If you're coming to GOSH for an outpatient appointment, you should arrive no more than ten minutes before your child's appointment time. This



will help us make sure waiting areas don't get too crowded. For everything else you need to know before your outpatient appointment, please read our special guidance at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-outpatients.

If you have any questions or concerns about your upcoming trip to GOSH, please contact the PALS team on 020 7829 7862 or at pals@gosh.nhs.uk or contact your clinical team via MyGOSH at gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh.

Q: What should we expect when we arrive?

A: When you visit GOSH, you may notice that things look or run slightly differently than previously. These steps have been put in place to keep everyone at GOSH as safe as possible. Things may continue to change as we respond to the latest guidance, but we will always contact you if there are any major changes to your child's appointment, admission or procedure.

When you arrive at one of our main entrances, only one adult will be allowed to enter the hospital. Unfortunately, no siblings or other friends and family members will be able to visit. Where possible, our GOSH Guides will then take you to the ward or give you directions.

We'll provide face masks for you to wear at all times while you're at GOSH, unless you're at your child's bedside, or eating or drinking.

We will need to test your child for COVID-19, even if they do not have symptoms, along with the parent or carer accompanying them. The test involves collecting a bit of mucus from their nose and/or throat, using a small tube or cotton bud. It might be a little uncomfortable and make them cough or sneeze. This will help us ensure we keep you, your child and everyone else at GOSH as safe as possible. You can find out exactly what's involved at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-testing.

You may notice other changes as you move around the hospital, for example one-way systems and new waiting area layouts. These changes are helping us to reopen services safely and we appreciate your support in making sure everyone follows the new guidance.

Please also check our specialty FAQs at gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-specialty-guides. These may include specific advice for your child and what to expect when you visit GOSH.

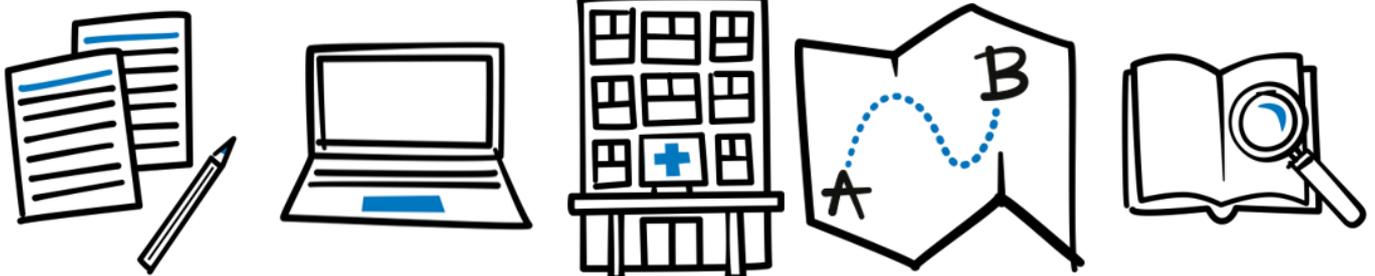
You might notice fewer hospital staff around the building. We have thought very carefully about how many people we need to deliver care safely to our patients, while minimising the number of people in the building. Our clinical teams have been reviewing every procedure, admission and appointment carefully to determine which patients are able to come to the hospital, which appointments can be delivered by other means, and which can be delayed safely. They have also been looking at the way we run our clinics and services, making changes to things like the layout of waiting areas and reducing the need for you to travel around the hospital.

You will see staff wearing various types of personal protective equipment (PPE), like masks and aprons. They're trained on how to reduce the risk of passing on the virus within the hospital, including when masks and other types of PPE should be worn and how cleaning activities should be carried out across the hospital. This is based on the latest national guidance for COVID-19 infection control.

We are also advising staff, patients and families to follow social distancing and handwashing guidelines wherever possible. You might notice our friendly starfish floor stickers around the hospital, reminding everyone to keep a safe distance. You can watch our family-friendly animation at gosh.nhs.uk/staysafe to meet Otto the octopus and learn what you can do to avoid the spread of infection at GOSH.

Q: What about testing?

A: We're listening carefully to the latest national guidance on COVID-19 testing, to make sure we keep you, your family and our staff as safe as possible. In line with the latest advice, we are now testing patients and the parent accompanying them to GOSH.



The test will involve collecting a bit of mucus from the nose and/or throat, using a small tube or cotton bud. It might be a little uncomfortable and make your child cough or sneeze. You can find out exactly what's involved at [gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-testing](https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/covid-19-testing).

This will help us ensure we keep you, your child and everyone else at GOSH as safe as possible. If your child tests positive for COVID-19, we will still ensure they get the care and treatment they need. If you have any concerns about having the test, please contact your clinical team.

We have clear processes in place to immediately isolate anyone found to be positive, while continuing to deliver expert care and follow strict infection control guidelines. If you or your child have symptoms before you come to GOSH, please call your clinical team before you leave, for advice and support.

Staff who start to show symptoms while they are at work will immediately remove themselves from clinical areas for the safety of their patients.

For key hospital staff who have been isolating at home, we have a very clear process to decide when and how it's safe for them to return to work. This goes above and beyond Government guidelines and is designed to make sure no one returns to work unless they are fully recovered and not putting others at risk.

Q. How do I get my child's medicines?

A: To reduce the risks of COVID-19 infection, we need to restrict people coming to GOSH. This includes visiting to collect medication. We are making arrangements to post your child's medicines to your home via Royal Mail Special Delivery. We will contact you to discuss your child's specific needs and preferences.

We hope this helps to ensure your child's medicine supply is not affected in the current situation. As always, please make sure you have at least two weeks' supply of regular and long-

term medicines. If you have moved home recently, please make sure that we have your current address and contact details. If you have any queries about your child's medicines, please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist, check the [Electronic Medicines Compendium website](#) or email medicine.information@gosh.nhs.uk.

You can also use the MyGOSH online portal to keep in touch with your child's clinical team, discuss their medicines, view test results, change appointments and more. Find out more and register at [gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh](https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh).

If you are staying at GOSH and your child needs medicines to take home with them, we will collect these from the Pharmacy and bring them to you on the ward.

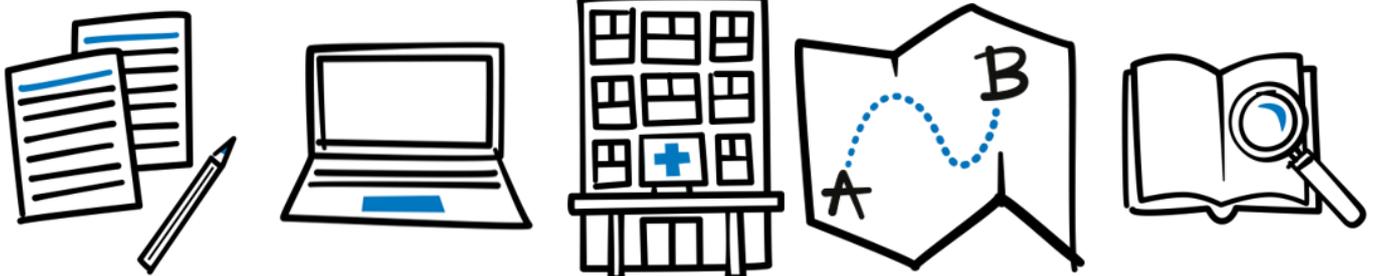
Q: Will you be offering the vaccine to children and young people?

A: The vaccines are not licensed by the MHRA for people under 16 years old so we can't offer this to children and young people. Our main priority at the moment is offering the vaccine to all our members of staff – clinical and non-clinical – as we believe this is the best way to beat the virus.

Q: Can we drive to GOSH? What about parking?

A: Learn more about parking at GOSH [here](#) or ask at main reception (open 24/7) when you arrive at the hospital.

Please note that Transport for London (TfL) has reinstated all road charges. See [tfl.gov.uk](https://www.tfl.gov.uk) for more information. In specific circumstances, you may be able to be reimbursed for congestion charge payments – visit [gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/travel-reimbursement](https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/travel-reimbursement) to see if you're eligible.



**Q: Some local cafés and shops are closed.
How will we get food?**

A: To make sure you have access to hot and cold food all day, our Lagoon restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

You'll find a selection of main meals to choose from, including Halal and vegetarian options. There are also lighter snacks, fresh fruit and delicious puddings.

You may find some shops open in the local area, which will be operating with social distancing measures in place. Many cafés and restaurants are open for takeaways only at the moment.

Q: Will the Play team still be here to support my child during our appointment, procedure or admission?

A: Play is an essential part of the support provided to patients at GOSH, and the hospital's dedicated Play team will continue to work with patients at the hospital during this time, while following all the infection control guidelines that are in place. As part of this, we have taken the decision to close play areas, but have a variety of ways patients can still access play services.

The Play team have prepared activity packs including single use crafts, protected in sealed bags, for patients and their carer to use in their

own room or bay. Play Specialist support for distraction is available as well as a range of sensory toys that are soothing.

If you have any questions about how to access the support of our Play team, please check the sign on the ward's play room door, speak to your ward's Play Specialist, or ask the Nurse in Charge. You can find online resources for families, including activities recommended by the Play team, at gosh.nhs.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-information-hub/covid-19-resources-families.

Q: What are you doing to protect GOSH staff?

A: Supporting our wonderful staff is a major priority for GOSH. We are carefully following updates in Public Health England (PHE) advice, including changes to PPE recommendations.

We want to make sure our staff feel safe, valued, looked after and able to ask for help if they need it. This has included offering support with things like accommodation near the hospital and on-site food provision, as well as free services to support mental health and wellbeing.

You will see our staff wearing masks and other types of personal protective equipment (PPE) around the hospital. All staff are following strict guidelines about when PPE should and should not be worn, based on the latest NHS guidance.

Further information and support

Information from the NHS at nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

Information for children is available on the BBC Newsround website at bbc.co.uk/newsround

Information from the RCPCH website at www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/covid-19-resources-parents-carers

Information from our specialty departments

You can find guidance for specific patient groups [here](#). These were put together by our specialist clinical teams and are being reviewed and added to regularly.

