

# Public Health Wales statement on Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

This statement will be updated daily at 5 pm

**Statement: Wednesday 23 December**

Dr Giri Shankar, Incident Director for the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak response at Public Health Wales, said:

"The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has now authorised the first COVID-19 vaccine as safe and effective on the basis of detailed independent expert review of evidence from large scale clinical trials.

"The Pfizer BioNTech vaccine has become the first to receive MHRA clearance in the UK and 40 million doses of the vaccine will shortly be available for delivery across the UK, with Wales getting its allocation based on population.

"This is welcome news, however the effects of the vaccine may not be seen nationally for many months and it is extremely important that everyone continues to follow the advice on keeping Wales safe; keep contacts with other people to a minimum, keep a 2 metre distance from others, wash hands regularly, wear a face covering where required, and self-isolating when asked to do so.

"It is now clear from the data that the Coronavirus cases are rising in most parts of Wales, reversing the downward trend we had observed as a result of the fire break.

"The Welsh Government have introduced restrictions for the hospitality sector from Friday 4 December ahead of Christmas period, in order to reduce the opportunities for the virus to spread in our communities and to keep people safe.

"Pubs, restaurants, bars and cafes will need to close at 6pm apart from takeaway services, and will not be able to serve alcohol.

"Indoor entertainment venues such as cinemas, bingo halls, soft play centres and bowling alleys must close from the same date, as must indoor visitor attractions such as museums, galleries and heritage sites.

"Public Health Wales strongly urges everyone to follow these rules, to avoid transmission of Coronavirus and to protect everyone in our communities, including the most vulnerable.

"Due to high numbers of positive cases in Torfaen, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board is operating a number of mobile COVID-19 testing units across Torfaen. The mobile units will provide a walk up testing service for residents who live nearby, and are open for an additional day today. More locations across Torfaen and dates for the next two weeks will be announced in the coming days.

"Torfaen residents who experience even mild symptoms of coronavirus – a fever, continuous cough or loss of taste or smell – or feel generally unwell, should call 0300 30 31 222 or visit <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> to book a test.

"The festive period is important for people across Wales who want to be with loved ones during the holidays, particularly after a very difficult year, but we would remind everyone that we must each continue to take personal responsibility to limit the spread of the virus and protect our loved ones, particularly if they are vulnerable or extremely vulnerable. For many, this will mean that it isn't possible to celebrate Christmas in the way you normally would.

"Public Health Wales is encouraging everyone who lives, works or studies in Merthyr Tydfil to attend the mass testing service at the Leisure Centre as soon as they can – even if they do not have symptoms.

"Thank you to those who have already attended and undertaken a test, as this will help us to break the chains of transmission in the area. However, in order for the exercise to be as successful as possible then we need as many people in the area as possible to be tested.

"For more information about the testing exercise, visit [the MTCBC website](#).

"Anyone aged 11+ without any symptoms can have a test, but children under 18 will need parental consent. The more people who get tested, the more chances we have to reduce the spread of the virus.

"People with symptoms should also get tested but need to book a test either by calling 119 or [by clicking here](#).

“We understand that people will want to do their Christmas shopping at this time of year. We would suggest to try to visit shops during off-peak times, to always maintain social distancing and to wear a face covering if you can. Options such as ‘click and collect’ or online purchasing may also be something to consider.

“We ask the public to observe the regulations and to limit their contact with other people as much as possible so that we all work together to bring the numbers of positive cases down.

“This means staying out of other people’s homes, limiting the times and the numbers of people that you meet, maintaining social distancing and hand hygiene, working from home if you can, and self-isolating if you show symptoms of coronavirus or are asked to do so by contact tracers.

“All of these actions will help to break the chains of transmission, reduce the spread of the virus, and keep people safe.

“Action has been taken following reports from health authorities in Denmark that widespread outbreaks of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) has been found in mink farms, with subsequent spread of a mink-variant virus to the local community.

“As a precautionary measure, Denmark was removed from the UK Coronavirus travel corridor list on Friday 6 November. Any travellers returning to the UK will now be required to self-isolate for 14 days according to the national guidance and legislation <https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control/self-isolating-when-you-arrive>.

“We would also advise all members of the public with pet mink or ferrets to avoid contact with them while symptomatic with any COVID symptoms.

“We recognise that many people may be finding life more challenging, resulting in difficulties with mental health. There are many agencies which provide help and support, including the C.A.L.L. helpline on 0800 132 737, which will refer callers to the most appropriate organisation according to their needs.

“If you are in severe mental distress or are having suicidal thoughts, please contact Samaritans Cymru free on 116 123. You can also find sources of advice and guidance on our [website](#) if you need some help or are worried about a loved one.

“NHS Wales is still here to help you if you need care, and it’s important you continue to attend appointments and seek help for urgent medical issues. You should phone beforehand and follow any guidance your local surgery, dentist, optometrist or health service has put in place to protect you and staff, including the need to keep 2m away from other patients.

“If you or a member of your household develop symptoms of the Coronavirus, such as a cough, fever or change in sense of taste or smell, you must self-isolate immediately and book a free Coronavirus test at [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](http://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) or by calling 119.

“Helpful advice and support is available via the NHS COVID-19 app. As well as providing alerts if you have been in contact with someone with Coronavirus, the app will also tell you the current risk level in your area.

“Information about the symptoms of Coronavirus is available on the Public Health Wales website, or via the NHS 111 Wales symptom checker.

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