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

This statement will be updated daily at midday

Statement: Updated at 12pm on Tuesday 19 January 2021

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

"While there has been a reduction in the numbers of positive Coronavirus cases in several parts of Wales, this data needs to be verified over several days before we can be sure that it is showing an established downward trend.

"Despite this, the number of cases remains extremely high in Wales and is cause for serious concern, due to the impact on NHS Wales services and the prevalence of the new, more infectious variant.

"In order to avoid adding to the current severe pressure on hospitals, it is extremely important that everyone continues to remain vigilant, by staying at home and sticking to the rules.

"All of Wales remains in lockdown. We ask that the public adopts the same mindset for this lockdown as they did in March 2020. We understand that people are fatigued but because the new, more infectious variant of coronavirus is circulating across Wales it is vital that we all keep to the lockdown restrictions and do not meet other people.

"This means that you must stay at home. If exercising outdoors, please do this alone or with members of your household or support bubble only. Shop online, but if you do need to visit essential retail then do this alone, if possible, to minimise numbers of people in retail spaces, and avoid stopping to chat with people outside your household. If you must leave home keep your distance, wash your hands regularly, and wear a face mask when required according to the regulations.

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

"Public Health Wales is working with UK partners to investigate and respond to the new variant of coronavirus identified in Wales. The new variant is easier to spread and the public should remain highly vigilant in measures to prevent transmission including maintaining social distancing, regularly handwashing and wearing of face coverings. Though the new variant is more infectious, there is no evidence that it leads to more severe disease.

"Following regulations introduced on Monday, if you intend to travel to England, Scotland, or Wales, including UK nationals returning home from travel abroad, you must provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 test result taken up to 3 days before departure.

"Under current UK COVID-19 restrictions, you must stay at home. You must not leave home or travel, including internationally, unless you have a legally permitted reason to do so.

"If you are due to travel out of the UK, please be aware of the changing situation and keep an eye on the FCO website for up to date details.

"The roll-out of the Pfizer BioNTech and AstraZeneca Coronavirus vaccines continues in Wales with the the recently Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) approved Moderna vaccine to be incorporated into the programme soon.

"Daily vaccination data is published on the Public Health Wales dashboard. The headline summary includes daily cumulative numbers of individuals who have received a first and second vaccination dose. Public Health Wales is working closely with the Welsh Government as they deploy Coronavirus vaccinations through local health boards. Welsh Government is leading on the deployment of the vaccine in Wales.

"Vaccinating the adult population of Wales, to protect people from severe disease, is a significant task, and the vaccine will take time to reach everyone. The effects of the vaccines may not be seen nationally for some time, and we must continue to follow the advice on keeping Wales safe.

"The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has issued a short [statement](#) outlining the case for optimising the existing vaccine programme within the UK to achieve maximum short term impact. The JCVI advises initially prioritising delivery of the first vaccine dose as this is highly likely to have a greater public health impact in the short term and reduce the number of preventable deaths from COVID-19.

"Given the data available, and evidence from the use of many other vaccines, Public Health Wales fully supports the JCVI advice to increase a maximum interval between the first and second doses of 12 weeks for both Pfizer BioNTech and AstraZeneca vaccines.

"Members of the public should not phone your GP, pharmacy or hospital asking when they will get a vaccine. When someone is in one of the groups eligible for the vaccine, they will be invited to attend a dedicated clinic which will have been set up to ensure patient safety and that of the healthcare professionals.

"If you or a member of your household develop a cough, fever or change in sense of taste or smell, you must self-isolate immediately and book a free Coronavirus test, either by calling 119 or [by clicking here](#).

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