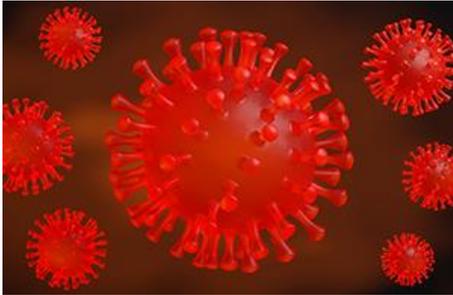


Coronavirus: what it means for you if you have heart or circulatory disease



British Heart
Foundation

ADVICE

Our medical experts explain what we know about the Covid-19 coronavirus and what we don't. Coronavirus (Covid-19) has been in the news since the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, at the end of December. This virus is now circulating around the world, including the UK. Although relatively small numbers of people in the UK have been affected, the number is growing and is likely to rise further. The government rates the risk of acquiring this condition as **moderate**. And while anxiety is understandable the vast majority of people affected will experience only mild symptoms and can recover at home.

I have a heart or circulatory condition – what should I do about coronavirus?

While it is normal to feel anxious about how this condition might affect you, the good news is we know that you are at no greater risk of developing it than anyone else and you may reduce your risk further if you follow the advice provided by the NHS and the UK government.

- Follow the recommended hygiene instructions, especially washing your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds
- Try to lead a healthy lifestyle - eating a diet including plenty of fruit and vegetables, taking regular exercise and getting 7 to 8 hours sleep will help your immune system to deal with any infection
- If you do feel unwell, it's still really important to carry on taking any medication you've been prescribed. Ask someone to collect your prescriptions from the pharmacy if necessary.

There is no specific advice for people with heart or circulatory conditions to avoid travel, work, public gatherings or medical appointments if they have not been exposed to coronavirus or visited an affected area.

You may wish to avoid travelling to areas in which coronavirus is known to be circulating. We recommend that you follow the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) travel advice. This currently includes [advice against all but essential travel to Italy](#).

- Read the Foreign and Commonwealth Office [travel advice](#).

What is coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that are responsible for different illnesses including the common cold. In this specific outbreak, it started in animals and then transmitted to humans. The current outbreak is called a novel coronavirus because it has not been identified previously in humans. Covid-19 is not a cold.

The NHS has all the [information and advice](#) that is available on Covid-19 for the public on their website and it is regularly updated. The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) regularly updates its website on the global picture as well as providing myth-busters to the unreliable information that is circulating about this condition.

What are the symptoms of Covid-19?

The main symptoms to watch out for are a **cough** and **fever** as well as **shortness of breath**. A sore throat or runny nose are not symptoms of Covid-19, although you could have another infection so you should still follow good hygiene precautions.

How serious is Covid-19?

Fortunately, most people recover quickly. However, we know that in some the symptoms can be more severe. So far, we know that older people, people who have conditions including heart and circulatory disease, [diabetes](#), lung disease or a weakened immune system are at an increased risk of developing complications and needing to be admitted to hospital if they develop the condition.

How is coronavirus treated?

Currently, there is **no specific vaccine or treatment** for Covid-19 so the goal is to treat symptoms and reduce the risk of others becoming infected. It helps to:

- get plenty of rest
- keep hydrated
- take simple remedies such as paracetamol to help with symptoms such as a high temperature

Antibiotics do not help, as they do not work against viruses. Researchers around the world are working to try to develop a vaccine but this takes time and at present trials are on animals only.

How is coronavirus spread?

Coronavirus is spread by droplet infection - coughing and sneezing or by close contact with someone who has the virus.

Like the normal cold virus, it's spread from one person to another but this condition is not a cold, it is a respiratory illness. To reduce the spread the advice provided universally is to **cover your mouth and nose when sneezing using a tissue**. (If you don't have a tissue, sneeze into your elbow instead of your hands.) Put the tissue straight into a closed bin. **Wash your hands with soap and hot water often, and for at least 20 seconds**. Try to avoid people who cough and sneeze or who you know are currently unwell with the symptoms.

What should I do if I think I might have symptoms of coronavirus?

If you have symptoms that could be caused by coronavirus, such as a **high temperature** or a **new, continuous cough**, you should self-isolate and **stay at home for the next 7 days**. Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you are staying at home.

Read the [NHS advice about staying at home](#)

Use the [NHS 111 online coronavirus service](#) if:

- you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home
- your condition gets worse
- your symptoms do not get better after 7 days

Only call 111 if you cannot get help online.

Can I go on holiday?

Some people are happy to delay their holiday for a while and others are keen to have a break. Although there are no hard and fast rules, it is important that you feel well, have valid travel insurance and that you follow [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#) advice if travelling outside the UK, otherwise your travel insurance might be invalidated. Having an extra supply of your medications is sensible in case you are placed under quarantine.

Again we (BHF) recommend that you review the [information provided by the government](#), which is updated daily. However, if you live with a heart or circulatory condition and would like to speak with a cardiac nurse, you can call 0300 330 3300, Monday to Friday 9am-5pm, or email hearthelpline@bhf.org.uk.