

Factsheet 33

Updated on 16 February 2021

Advice for people with dementia and/or their carer who develop COVID-19 symptoms

This factsheet has been designed for use by healthcare professionals only.

There are several studies which have investigated the link between respiratory diseases and developing an increased risk of dementia. Such studies are listed below. With over 920,000 people in the UK living with dementia it is important that we are able to provide advice to these people and their carers who develop COVID-19 symptoms.¹

People living with dementia and their carers should be reminded:²

- To stay at home if possible until they are no longer contagious in line with government advice.
- If they have symptoms and have not had a test, they should be advised to stay at home and get a test to check if they have coronavirus.
- If COVID-19 symptoms do not go away after 7 days, get worse or they are having difficulty in breathing, they must call 111 for advice, or 999 should they need emergency care. It is vital patients or their carers inform the provider that they or the person has dementia and that their symptoms are getting worse.
- It is important to remember that a cough can last for several weeks after COVID-19; however, they should seek medical advice if their symptoms persist or are getting worse.
- Seek medical advice if their cognitive ability declines suddenly and monitor for signs of delirium. For further advice visit [Dementia UK](https://www.dementiauk.org).
- If they themselves or their carer test positive, then they will need to undertake self-isolation for ten days starting from the day the symptoms started (or the day they had the test if no symptoms are present).
- If the person with dementia or carer get symptoms while self-isolating, the ten days restarts from the day after the symptoms started.
- If the test is negative for either carer or the person with dementia, then it is important to continue to self-isolate for the rest of the ten days.



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- If the test is positive, the ten days restarts from the day after the symptoms started. This will mean self-isolation will be for more than ten days overall.
- It can take 14 days for symptoms to appear. If more than one person at home has symptoms, then they need to self-isolate from the day the first person started having symptoms.
- A person can stop self-isolating after the ten days if either:
 - They do not have any symptoms
 - They just have a cough or changes to their sense of smell or taste (these can last for weeks after the infection has gone).
- People should be advised to make plans should they need support with their daily routine or to care for the person living with dementia if the carer contracts the virus. This may include asking family and friends to help with getting food, medication and other essential items should the spread of the virus cause significant disruption to their life or they get symptoms and need to self-isolate. If support is not available from family/friends or neighbours then individuals can be signposted to their county council website. Most councils have added contact details for community hubs for self-isolating households who have no support available. Alternatively, healthcare professionals in your General Practice Surgery or their local Community Pharmacist may be able to refer them to NHS Volunteers scheme for the period of self- isolation.
- A local Admiral nurse can also help signpost carers for additional help and support and can be contacted through the Dementia UK website at or via their helpline at 08008886678.

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It is important to advise people to keep up to date with general guidance on Coronavirus (Covid-19) via the local government website as this information is regularly updated at:

- [For England, visit the page here](#)
- [For Scotland, visit the page here](#)
- [For Wales, visit the page here](#)
- [For Northern Ireland, visit the page here](#)

Further studies on the link between respiratory diseases and dementia see below:

- Clinical Study of Respiratory Function and Difference in Pneumonia History between Alzheimer's Disease and Vascular Dementia Groups. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4135208/>
- American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine. Impaired Lung Function, Lung Disease, and Risk of Incident Dementia. Available from: <https://www.atsjournals.org/doi/full/10.1164/rccm.201807-1220OC>
- Increased Risk of Dementia in Patients with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4616489/>

References:

¹Projections of older people with dementia and costs of dementia care in the United Kingdom, 2019–2040 https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/cpec_report_november_2019.pdf

²GOV UK Coronavirus (COVID-19) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>