



Coronavirus update from Somerset County Council

All our help and information is now **available in a single place** on the SCC website <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/latest-coronavirus-updates/>

This page is refreshed through the day so please check in regularly to keep across developments and news.

Public Health dashboard: Detailed Public Health information dashboards are available on our website www.somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus just scroll down to 'Covid-19 dashboard'. These are updated daily.

Top stories today:



Travel, traffic lights and please plan ahead

Travel is high on the news agenda this week with the Government publishing its update for the traffic lights system for international travel.

As a result of the review, Portugal will be moved to the amber list and seven countries, including Sri Lanka and Egypt, will be added to the red list. All changes to the lists will come into effect at 4am on Tuesday 8 June.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/portugal-moved-to-amber-list-to-guard-public-health-against-variants-of-concern-following-first-traffic-light-review>

If you're planning a holiday in the UK, maybe to explore a new city or to visit friends this summer, remember to travel safely and plan ahead.

As well as regularly washing your hands and wearing a face covering where needed, make sure you continue taking regular lateral flow (rapid) tests when you're away from home. For more information, visit [Coronavirus – Get a test if you have symptoms \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus-get-a-test-if-you-have-symptoms) where you will also find information on booking a follow-up PCR test if you get a positive result.

Travel is the focus for this week's Covid Catch Up when former BBC correspondent, Clinton Rogers, discusses good planning hints and tips as we move forward into the holiday season.

He talks about the need for good ventilation and fresh air when travelling in vehicles or meeting indoors, and highlights the importance of taking test kits with you and keeping up with your testing routine.

Clinton chats to Lou Woolway, Deputy Director of Public Health at Somerset County Council, about the need for travel planning and the importance of making some journeys on foot or by bike to help maintain good personal fitness. He also talks about what you should do if you develop Covid-19 symptoms or test positive while on holiday. Catch up with Clinton here: https://youtu.be/hxbXO_d9n9g



The second vaccine jab is vital

The vaccine is our best defence against the virus and returning to a more normal way of life. And while the first dose gives some level of immunity against coronavirus, it is vital that everyone goes on to receive a second dose – regardless of which vaccine you receive.

A single jab will not give you maximum protection against the virus – the best protection comes after the second. All three vaccines, Pfizer, Oxford AstraZeneca and Moderna are up to 90 per cent effective after two doses.*

Getting the second dose will send a powerful reminder for your immune system to attack when necessary.



Testing, testing, testing

Regular testing is for those without symptoms of Covid-19 and is so important in our fight against the virus as it helps break the chain of transmission, which might otherwise have gone unidentified.

Testing regularly, even when you do not have symptoms, means we can keep infection levels low and our country safe. There are five good reasons for regular testing:

- It finds and isolates people early who have coronavirus but don't have symptoms (asymptomatic), helping to stop the spread of the virus
- Alongside the vaccine rollout and social distancing, it is key to reducing infection and transmission, helping the country to keep moving
- It helps to identify and suppress new variants of concern, playing a vital role in limiting the spread of coronavirus
- It protects you and your loved ones
- When done correctly, the tests are at least 99.9 per cent specific, which means that the risk of false positives is extremely low – less than one in a thousand

In short, it's a simple and effective way for everybody to do their bit in stopping the spread of the virus.



Self-isolating

If you are unwell with Covid-19 symptoms or test positive for the virus you must self-isolate – it's the best way to stop spreading the infection to others.

Isolating is more important than ever, to make sure the virus does not spread in our communities.

Self-isolating means staying in your home and not leaving to collect food shopping, walk the dog or exercise. The only reason you should be leaving home during this period is to get a test for Covid-19.

You can find out more about when you should self-isolate and how long for on the [NHS website](#).



Access to GP Services

GP practices have been experiencing a very busy period over the last few weeks, and as a result they have a very high number of patients trying to contact them. This means there are currently longer waits for routine appointments than usual at some practices.

The NHS in Somerset is doing all it can to reduce waiting times, but there are lots of people who need healthcare help. Please continue to be patient and perhaps consider one of the alternatives to using a GP. These include:

- **Pharmacy** - As lockdown eases, don't forget your local high-street pharmacist can provide health advice and help with minor illnesses like coughs and colds, sunburn, hay fever and diarrhoea. You don't need an appointment and they can even provide you with the right medicines at the same time.
- **Mindline** - if you, or someone you know, is struggling with their mental wellbeing, our 24/7 Mindline is open to people of all ages. Just ring 01823 276 892.
- **111 First** - The 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and provides advice, treatment and care. Just ring 111 or visit <https://111.nhs.uk/>. The service will provide advice and refer you to

another service if you need it and if you need to be seen in person, they can book you a time slot.

- **Minor injury units** - Don't forget A&E is for life-threatening emergencies only. There's also a network of Minor Injury Units to provide the treatment you need – often they'll see you quicker and closer to home.

You can read an open letter from the NHS regarding this by clicking below.

[Read more >](#)



Thank you to all Somerset's volunteers

This week is Volunteers Week and Somerset County Council would like to thank everyone who has helped their communities over the past 12 months. We'd also like to highlight the important role volunteers will play in the year ahead.

Volunteers have played a vital role in the emergency response to the coronavirus pandemic, whether that's helping people with food support, prescription deliveries or transport to doctors' appointments, or assisting as marshals at Somerset's vaccination centres.

And the results of these volunteers' hard work speak for themselves. Somerset's local authorities and partner organisations worked with 43 volunteer groups from across the county to deliver more than 500,000 meals and items of food to people who needed it over the past year.

Volunteers have played a key role as marshals supporting Somerset's vaccination programme, which has now seen more than 605,000 Covid-19 vaccinations given. The success of the vaccination roll-out has contributed to significant falls in infections, hospitalisations, and deaths from the virus.

[Read more >](#)



Support for Somerset residents

Help is available for anyone in Somerset who may need additional support. The five councils in Somerset have been working together since the first lockdown to provide a single phone number for anyone in Somerset who needs Coronavirus-related support.

Residents are reminded they can call 0300 790 6275 if they need any help themselves or are concerned about relatives or neighbours. Lines are open seven days a week between 8am and 6pm.



Reduce the risks and follow advice

It's vital everyone acts to reduce their own risk, and the risk to others, from getting ill with coronavirus.

There's really important information available to help Somerset residents, businesses and visitors take all-important precautions.

Read more



Send to a friend

These coronavirus bulletins are now available to anyone. Please send to a friend who would like to stay up to date with the latest developments. To sign up simply visit [Coronavirus updates \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus-updates).

Read more



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