COVID-19 recovery

30th April 2021

**Title:** One dose of COVID-19 vaccine can cut household transmission by up to half

Public Health England | 28th April 2021

A new study by Public Health England (PHE) has shown that one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine reduces household transmission by up to half. Studies have already demonstrated that being vaccinated against coronavirus (COVID-19) significantly reduces your risk of being infected.

This new research shows that those who do become infected 3 weeks after receiving one dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or AstraZeneca vaccine were between 38% and 49% less likely to pass the virus on to their household contacts than those who were unvaccinated.

Protection was seen from around 14 days after vaccination, with similar levels of protection regardless of age of cases or contacts. This protection is on top of the reduced risk of a vaccinated person developing symptomatic infection in the first place, which is around 60 to 65% – 4 weeks after one dose of either vaccine.

Full research: [Impact of vaccination on household transmission of SARS-COV-2 in England](https://khub.net/documents/135939561/390853656/Impact%2Bof%2Bvaccination%2Bon%2Bhousehold%2Btransmission%2Bof%2BSARS-COV-2%2Bin%2BEngland.pdf/35bf4bb1-6ade-d3eb-a39e-9c9b25a8122a?t=1619601878136)

Press release: [One dose of COVID-19 vaccine can cut household transmission by up to half](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/one-dose-of-covid-19-vaccine-can-cut-household-transmission-by-up-to-half)

**Title:** Shift work is associated with positive COVID-19 status in hospitalised patients

Thorax | 26 April 2021

This study examined data from more than half a million shift workers to determine if following a shift pattern was associated with Covid-19. The experts behind this research analysed data from the UK Biobank- a database that contains detailed health information of 500 000 UK citizens. Their findings show that both permanent and irregular shift workers (encompassing both day and night shift workers) had increased odds, compared with workers who never worked shifts, shift work therefore is treated as a modifiable risk factor for COVID-19. This risk could potentially be mitigated via additional workplace precautions or vaccination.

Full article: [Shift work is associated with positive COVID-19 status in hospitalised patients](https://thorax.bmj.com/content/thoraxjnl/early/2021/03/30/thoraxjnl-2020-216651.full.pdf)

**Title:** Lockdowns hurt child speech and language skills

BBC News | The Education Endowment Foundation | 26th April 2021

There is growing evidence that the past year of lockdowns has had an impact on young children's language skills, according to research. The School Starters study, funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), aims to explore the impact of the disruption caused by the pandemic on children’s transition and adjustment to Reception classes across England. The primary research question is ‘What is the relationship between Reception Year children’s experiences of the COVID19 pandemic and their socioemotional wellbeing, language and numeracy skills?’

This paper reports initial findings from a survey of parents and schools carried out in the Autumn Term 2020.

Key Findings:

 • 76% of schools (44 out of 58 schools) reported that children who started school in Autumn 2020 needed more support than children in previous cohorts.

• According to schools, children are struggling particularly with three areas of development: 1) communication and language development (96%; 55 of 57 schools) of schools reported being ‘very concerned’ or ‘quite concerned’); 2) personal, social and emotional development (91%; 53 of 58 schools) ‘very concerned’ or ‘quite concerned’); and 3) literacy (89%; 51 of 57 schools) ‘very concerned’ or ‘quite concerned’).

• 56% of parents were concerned about their children starting school following the lockdown.

• A large proportion of parents who expressed concerns about their children’s transition to school were particularly concerned about children's social and emotional development (33%) while far fewer were concerned about language and communication (3%).

• Once the school year started, most parents (96%) thought that their child had settled in well and 85% of parents did not report any concerns about how their child was coping in school.

Further detail: [Lockdowns hurt child speech and language skills](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-56889035) | BBC News

Full report: [The impact of Covid-19 on School Starters: Interim briefing 1 Parent and school concerns about children starting school](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Impact_of_Covid19_on_School_Starters_-_Interim_Briefing_1_-_April_2021_-_Final.pdf)

**Title:** How has lockdown changed our relationship with nature?

Office for National Statistics | 26th April 2021

More than a year on from the first national lockdown in spring 2020, this article looks at how people's perception of nature changed during the pandemic and whether this is likely to continue as restrictions ease.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has forced people to interact with familiar surroundings in new ways. While bedrooms have become offices, gardens – and the areas within walking distance of home – have become wildlife-watching spots and gyms. Nature has been a source of solace for many, as lockdown rules have heightened our appreciation for local parks and green spaces.

Drawing on several sources, this article looks at the impact of lockdown on exercise levels, usage of public green spaces and the link between nature and wellbeing, asking ‘has the pandemic changed our relationship with the outdoors forever’?

Full detail: [How has lockdown changed our relationship with nature?](https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/howhaslockdownchangedourrelationshipwithnature/2021-04-26)

**Title:** Mental health patients ‘missed out on care’ during Covid

The Guardian | 25th April 2021

Mental health patients found their conditions deteriorated during the pandemic because the NHS switched from in-person help to support by telephone, video and text messages, new research reveals.

Many reported a lower quality of care, according to a study by University College London; others had trouble accessing medication, had appointments cancelled or felt the loss of face-to-face help meant they “were missing out on care”.

Researchers led by Dr Brynmor Lloyd-Evans found that, for many patients, the switch to remote care heightened the isolation and loneliness they were already feeling because they could no longer see friends and family.

Full detail: [Mental health patients ‘missed out on care’ during Covid](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/apr/25/mental-health-patients-missed-out-on-care-during-covid)

Full research: [Experiences of living with mental health problems during the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK: a coproduced, participatory qualitative interview study](https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s00127-021-02051-7.pdf) | Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology

**Title:** UK secures extra 60 million Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines

Department of Health and Social Care | 28th April 2021

An extra 60 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine have been secured by the UK government to help support the booster COVID-19 vaccination programme beginning from the autumn. To protect the most vulnerable ahead of the winter, the government is preparing for a booster programme based on clinical need to ensure people have the strongest possible protection against COVID-19.

The additional Pfizer/BioNTech jabs will be used alongside other approved COVID-19 vaccines for the booster programme.

Full detail: [UK secures extra 60 million Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-secures-extra-60-million-pfizerbiontech-covid-19-vaccines)

See also: [UK orders 60m more doses of Pfizer Covid vaccine for booster jabs](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/apr/28/uk-orders-60m-more-doses-of-pfizer-covid-vaccine-for-booster-jabs) | The Guardian

**Title:** Self-taken swabs can track a pandemic’s hidden patterns

Science | 23rd April 2021

Regular swabbing of a random sample of the population quickly detects the resurgence of SARS-CoV-2 infections, even in young adults.

The researchers tested nose and throat samples from 594,000 randomly selected UK residents, who swabbed themselves or their children between 1 May and 8 September 2020. The study found that, during that time, the SARS-CoV-2 infection rate dipped as low as 0.04% in the tested population — down from around 5% in early 2020 at the height of the United Kingdom’s first wave — and then began climbing to a peak of about 0.13% in the final round of testing.

Prevalence rates early in the second wave were highest among young adults aged 18–24, at 0.25%, compared with 0.04% among those aged 65 and older. This suggests that increased socializing by younger people probably drove the resurgence. These age patterns were not reflected in data from routine surveillance at health-service providers, which underestimated infection rates in younger age groups.

The researchers say that their study demonstrates the benefit of large-scale community testing in providing an early warning of spikes in infections, even at low levels of transmission.

Full article: [Resurgence of SARS-CoV-2: detection by community viral surveillance](https://science.sciencemag.org/content/sci/early/2021/04/22/science.abf0874.full.pdf)

**Title:** Associations between body-mass index and COVID-19 severity in 6·9 million people in England: a prospective, community-based, cohort study

The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology | 28th April 2021

Obesity is a major risk factor for adverse outcomes after infection with SARS-CoV-2. This study aimed to examine this association, including interactions with demographic and behavioural characteristics, type 2 diabetes, and other health conditions.

At a BMI of more than 23 kg/m2, the authors found a linear increase in risk of severe COVID-19 leading to admission to hospital and death, and a linear increase in admission to an ICU across the whole BMI range, which is not attributable to excess risks of related diseases. The relative risk due to increasing BMI is particularly notable people younger than 40 years and of Black ethnicity.

Full article: [Associations between body-mass index and COVID-19 severity in 6·9 million people in England: a prospective, community-based, cohort study](https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2213-8587%2821%2900089-9)

Related: [New insights into the association between body-mass index and severe COVID-19](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landia/article/PIIS2213-8587%2821%2900109-1/fulltext)

**Title:** SARS-CoV-2 elimination, not mitigation, creates best outcomes for health, the economy, and civil liberties

The Lancet | 28th April 2021

Countries which aimed to eliminate COVID-19 registered fewer deaths, better economic performance and fewer restrictions and lockdowns, according to this article in The Lancet. Countries’ responses to the pandemic were compared by a team of experts. The team found that, on average, over the first 12 months of the pandemic, but also at almost all time periods, countries which focused on mitigation saw more deaths, negative GDP growth and more severe restrictions on civil liberties.

Full article: [SARS-CoV-2 elimination, not mitigation, creates best outcomes for health, the economy, and civil liberties](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2821%2900978-8/fulltext)

**Title:** The coronavirus inquiry. The case for an investigation of government actions during the Covid-19 pandemic

Institute for Government | 29th April 2021

While the UK’s vaccine rollout deserves credit, on many key measures the UK has done worse than many of its peers in Europe and across the developed world. Decisions made by the UK government – from delaying lockdowns to bungled plans for school re-openings – may have led to more deaths, more economic harm and more other costs to livelihoods than need have been the case.

The fact the UK experienced two waves within 12 months reinforces the importance of learning lessons sooner rather than later, and of fixing systemic weaknesses in how this and future governments react to complex situations. This report sets out the case for an inquiry.

Full report: [The coronavirus inquiry. The case for an investigation of government actions during the Covid pandemic](https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/coronavirus-inquiry.pdf)

**Title:** Assessing England’s response to Covid-19: A framework

The Kings Fund | 29th April 2021

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a deep shock to the country, whether counted in terms of deaths and ill health, the damage to the economy and livelihoods, or in the deep disruption to daily life. Covid-19 has also had a disproportionate impact on some communities, increasing and emphasising the inequalities that existed before the pandemic arrived. This combination of high number of deaths and deep inequalities will leave a long and difficult legacy.

Learning the lessons from Covid-19 would allow England to better prepare for any future pandemic, but also to understand the general weaknesses and strengths of its health, care and public health systems. Given the wide-ranging nature of the pandemic and its impact on so much of so many people’s lives, health and the economy, a public inquiry to assess the response will be essential. This article proposes a framework for such an inquiry.

Full detail: [Assessing England’s response to Covid-19: A framework](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/assessing-englands-response-covid-19)

**Title:** The unequal mental health toll of the pandemic

The Health Foundation | 28th April 2021

Over the past year, mental health has been in the news continuously – an acknowledgement that the pandemic poses risks beyond our physical health. This article states now is the time to channel this interest and commit to making things better for people who were struggling both before and during the pandemic. We must also use greater interest in mental health from the public and from government to strengthen action on inequalities so we can tackle the causes of poor mental health. The article identifies the following priorities:

* Better access to support
* Joined-up services
* Acknowledging distrust
* Working with lived experience

Full detail: [The unequal mental health toll of the pandemic](https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/blogs/the-unequal-mental-health-toll-of-the-pandemic)

**Title:** The first wave of the COVID‐19 pandemic and its impact on socioeconomic inequality in psychological distress in the UK

Health Economics | 26th April 2021

The first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic saw more people suffer mental health problems in the UK according to new research from the University of East Anglia and the University of York.

The research reveals that the amount of people suffering some form of psychological distress rose by almost 50 per cent during the peak of the pandemic’s first wave in April 2020, compared to 2019 figures. The prevalence of psychological distress increased from 19 per cent in 2019 to 28 per cent in April 2020. The study also shows that the distribution of mental health problems within the population became more unequal during the first wave of the COVID-19 outbreak.

But the study, which follows people’s experience over time, shows that levels of psychological distress had moved back towards pre-pandemic levels by the end of the first wave in July 2020.

Full paper: [The first wave of the COVID‐19 pandemic and its impact on socioeconomic inequality in psychological distress in the UK](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/hec.4275)

**Title:** The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health in the general population: a comparison between Germany and the UK

BMC Psychology | 24th April 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to dramatic social and economic changes in daily life. First studies report an impact on mental health of the general population showing increased levels of anxiety, stress and depression. In this study, the authors compared the impact of the pandemic on two culturally and economically similar European countries: the UK and Germany.

Participants completed an online-survey assessing COVID-19 exposure, impact on financial situation and work, substance and media consumption, mental health using the Symptom-Check-List-27 (SCL-27) and the Schizotypal Personality Questionnaire.

The researchers found distinct differences between the two countries. UK responders reported a stronger direct impact on health, financial situation and families. UK responders had higher clinical scores on the SCL-27, and higher prevalence. Interestingly, German responders were less hopeful for an end of the pandemic and more concerned about their life-stability.

As 25% of both German and UK responders reported a subjective worsening of the general psychological symptoms and 20-50% of German and UK responders reached the clinical cut-off for depressive and dysthymic symptoms as well as anxieties, it specifically shows the need for tailored intervention systems to support large proportions of the general public.

Full paper: [The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health in the general population: a comparison between Germany and the UK](https://bmcpsychology.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s40359-021-00565-y.pdf)

**Title:** Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health and well-being of UK healthcare workers

BJPsych Open | 29th April 2021

Shortly after the April 2020 UK COVID-19 peak 2773 HCWs completed a survey containing measures of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and stress, as well as questions around potential predictors such as roles, COVID-19 risk perception and workplace-related factors.

Nearly a third of HCWs reported moderate to severe levels of anxiety and depression, and the number reporting very high symptoms was more than quadruple that pre-COVID-19. Several controllable factors were associated with the most severe level of psychiatric symptoms: insufficient personal protective equipment availability, workplace preparation, training and communication, and higher workload. Being female, ‘front line’, previous psychiatric diagnoses, traumatic events, and being an allied HCW or manager were also significantly associated with severe psychiatric symptoms.

Sharing stress, resilience and ethical support for treatment decisions were significantly associated with low psychiatric symptoms. Front-line workers showed greater worsening of mental health compared with non-front-line HCWs.

The study concludes that poor mental well-being was prevalent during the COVID-19 response, however, controllable factors associated with severe psychiatric symptoms are available to be targeted to reduce the detrimental impact of COVID-19 and other pandemics on HCW mental health.

Full paper: [Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health and well-being of UK healthcare workers](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/bjpsych-open/article/impact-of-the-covid19-pandemic-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-of-uk-healthcare-workers/D7E2EA268395EC63205017929CD720D2)

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[TRFT Library & Knowledge Service](https://www.trftlibraryknowledge.com/) aim to bring together the latest guidelines, research and news on Covid-19 through our [Covid-19 portal](https://www.trftlibraryknowledge.com/coronavirus.html). For daily updates on Covid-19 visit our '[Latest Health](https://trfthealthweeklydigest.wordpress.com/)' newsfeed, or use the hashtag [#covid19rftlks](https://twitter.com/hashtag/covid19rftlks?src=hashtag_click) to see our latest tweets on Covid-19 research, guidelines and news.

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