

What is the change?

From 18 June 2020, people in the groups who have been asked to shield can go outside to take exercise as long as infection rates remain low. This will be confirmed on 18 June at the Scottish Government daily coronavirus briefing, through the SMS shielding service and on the Scottish Government website. It is really important that people keep a physical distance of two metres from others. This advice applies to people of all ages who are shielded, including pregnant women and children who are shielded, but does not include those who live in a residential or nursing home.

There is NO change to the support offered to those who are shielded so if you have been getting support or food deliveries this will continue as before.

Why has this change been made now?

When we were first faced with COVID-19, we knew very little about how likely it was to spread and which people might be most at risk. Now we have much more information, we can give more informed advice. Firstly, we now know that the risks from being outside and catching COVID-19 are very low indeed. This is because studies have shown daylight kills the virus that causes COVID-19 very quickly, within minutes. So the chance of getting the infection from objects outside that have been touched by somebody else is very small. Secondly, we have been monitoring the number of cases of COVID-19 within the community. This number has been dropping steadily over the last 4 weeks, which means the number of people who are infectious is very low – the latest estimate is fewer than 1 in 500 people. Both these factors have allowed us to recommend this change, which will be of benefit to mental and physical health and well-being.

How long can I stay outside?

There is no time limit to how long people go outside for; the important thing is to stay two metres away from other people, so avoid crowded places or busy times. You should always wash your hands when you return indoors.

What can I do outside?

You can do whatever level of exercise feels comfortable for you. It is important to consider that if you have not been exercising for the last few months you may wish to take things slowly at first.

You can go outdoors for a walk, wheel, run or cycle. We do not recommend that you take part in outdoor activities such as golf, hiking, canoeing, outdoor swimming, angling, etc. in the same way as the rest of the population can just now. You:

- Can go out on your own, with someone you live with, or with a carer
- If you can you should maintain physical distancing (also known as social distancing) at all times. You must do this, if possible, even if you live with the person you're out with or they are your usual carer. This means keeping 2 metres (or three steps) away from other people at all times.
- Should not meet with anyone you do not live with
- Should choose times and areas that are quiet, if you can
- Should wash your hands for at least 20 seconds as soon as you get back home

How far can I go outside?

The government is asking people to stay within 5 miles of their house. This is the same for people who are shielded. You can travel in a car either driving yourself or being driven by someone you live with.

Can I meet people from other houses?

At the moment the change is only that you can go outside (either on your own, with people you already live with or your carer), not that you can meet people from outside your household. The main route of transmission of COVID-19 is from droplets spread from an infected person when they cough. Studies have shown that the risk of getting the infection from such droplets is very small if you are 2 metres or more away, as they will have fallen to the ground. This is why general advice from Government has been to allow groups of no more than 8 to meet up outside while staying 2 metres apart. We are not suggesting that people who have been shielded can meet people from other households. We are taking things slowly to make sure that there isn't an increase in infections. We very much hope that in time we can recommend that those who are shielded can meet people from other households.

Does this advice apply to children and young people?

Yes. The advice should be followed in a way which is right for the age of your child or young person. It is important that there should be supervision, if needed, from a parent or a carer to make sure physical distancing is followed. Please make sure they wash their hands as soon as they come back in.

Can I go shopping or to the chemist?

No, at the moment the guidance is still that you cannot go inside other buildings: you can just go outside to exercise or to sit and relax. The virus can survive much longer indoors which is why we are limiting the advice to being outdoors.

Can I go back to work?

Not at the moment, this change means that you can go outside not that you can go back to work. It is important that people who are shielded stay 2 metres away from other people and do not go inside any other buildings.

Will this advice change again?

Like everything this advice will be kept under review. If it is felt that community transmission has increased and it is no longer as safe for people who are shielded to go outside then this decision will be reviewed. However, if we are confident that transmission remains well controlled we will continue to review the advice provided.

What other sources of support are available to me?

We understand that these are worrying and uncertain times. You may find it helpful to visit the <https://clearyourhead.scot/> website.

The national COVID-19 helpline continues to operate. Please contact 0800 111 4000 if you need any support with shielding.

11 June 2020