

## Self-isolation Q&A:

### CMO's statement:

- **What are the new rules?**

There will be no basic change for **infected people**: 10 days from symptom onset (if symptomatic) or from test date (if asymptomatic). However, England will align so that the way all four UK countries apply the 10-day rule: in all cases the day after symptom onset or test date is counted as the first full day of self-isolation.

**Household contacts** will be able to stop self-isolation after 10 days from when the index case developed symptoms (or test date if asymptomatic). [Note: as above, this will be the end of the tenth full day after the day of symptom onset or test]

**Non-household contacts** will be able to stop self-isolation after 10 days from their most recent contact with the index case. [Note: as above, this will be the end of the tenth full day after the day of most recent contact]

**International arrivals** from countries not on the travel corridor list will be able to stop self-isolation 10 days after their departure from a country or territory that is not on the travel corridor list. From the 15 December, international arrivals can further shorten their self-isolation period by opting into 'Test to Release for International Travel', and paying to take a private test from the 5<sup>th</sup> full day since they left a destination not on the travel corridors list. If they test negative, they can stop self-isolating.

- **How will these be enforced and who will enforce them?**

#### **Domestic**

**For positive cases and their close contacts**, there are no changes in the arrangements for enforcing the legal duty to self-isolate – the only change is the length of the self-isolation period. Where there is a breach of the legal duty, the police can issue a fixed penalty notice of £1,000, rising to £10,000 for multiple breaches.

**For international arrivals** the enforcement process will remain the same as existing measures. Anyone failing to comply with the mandatory conditions may face enforcement action. As the PM has made clear, all enforcement penalties under COVID regulations should be increased to a maximum of £10,000 for multiple breaches.

Failure to self-isolate if required following international travel attracts a £1,000 penalty, and anyone who commits a second offence is liable to receive a penalty of £2,000. Further repeat offences will attract penalties of £4,000 and then £10,000 for each offence. This is the same ladder of penalties as for the domestic requirements.

The enforcement and penalty regime is being implemented by Border Force and the Police. Immigration Officers are authorised to enforce the requirement to provide contact details. The Police have the powers to enforce the requirement to self-isolate.

In England and Northern Ireland, Public Health England have set up an assurance service to contact a sample of arrivals by phone to ensure they understand the requirements and are self-isolating.

- **Why are we changing to a day 0 start? Doesn't this mean we have to self-isolate for 11 days?**

We are aligning with the Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland so isolation is determined by full days of isolation, not partial days.

- **What evidence have the CMO's reviewed? Can we see it?**

This decision was made based on the current available evidence, including but not limited to SAGE, NERVTAG, academic papers and PHE modelling. It is not based on a single paper, or piece of evidence, but an accumulation of evidence over time.

The UK CMOs then apply their expert judgement. This evidence shows that the likelihood of being infectious as a contact after 10 days is low. 10 days isolation does provide more risk than 14 days, if adherence remains the same.

The UK CMOs view is that 10 day isolation for contacts is the appropriate balance of risk given the current data and the current stage of the epidemic.

- **Was there political pressure to make this decision?**

The decision was made by the UK CMOs based on the data and the stage of the epidemic, and their expert clinical judgement.

- **Why has it taken so long to change the isolation period?**

Decisions on self-isolation, and other clinical aspects of the COVID-19 response, should change based on the changing data, and the stage of the epidemic. At this stage in the epidemic and given the current data the UK CMOs view is that 10 day isolation for contacts and international arrivals is the appropriate balance of risk.

- **What has changed in order for us to alter our advice?**

This decision was made based on the current available evidence, including but not limited to SAGE, NERVTAG, academic papers and PHE modelling. It is not based on a single paper, or piece of evidence, but an accumulation of evidence over time. The UK CMOs then apply their expert judgement. This evidence shows that the likelihood of being infectious as a contact after 10 days is low.

- **Why didn't we do this from the start, considering so many other countries felt 10 days was sufficient?**

We are right to take a precautionary approach with a new virus. We constantly review data and act when we have enough confidence. Isolation is essential as it breaks the chains of transmission.

- **Do the CMO's not believe people are self-isolating? What is the current data on this?**

This is a concern. We would encourage everyone to follow the rules as the vast majority of the public have been doing so far. Isolation is essential as it breaks the chains of transmission.

Data from the Test and Trace system in England, which will be published shortly, shows that over half of contacts report staying at home for their self-isolation period. It remains essential to seek to maximise the number of people who are reliably self-isolating when required to do so.

- **Do we have evidence that more people will follow a shorter self-isolation period?**

The evidence suggests there are a wide range of factors affecting people's adherence to self-isolation, many of which may be affected by the length of the self-isolation period.

The evidence also suggests that adherence is also affected by differing levels of understanding about self-isolation requirements, including the length of the self-isolation period – so a 10-day rule across all groups is likely to improve public understanding and adherence.

- **Have all the DA governments agreed to this change?**

Yes, this change will apply in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as agreed by the 4 CMOs for each respective DA. The change has already come into place in Wales and will come into effect for the rest of the UK on Monday.

### **General:**

- **Why is this being announced before it comes into effect?**

This change is already in place in Wales and comes into effect for the rest of the UK on Monday, it is being announced in line with this timetable.

- **If you are told to self-isolate this weekend, how long do you have to self-isolate for?**

The reduction to ten days will be applied for both current contacts self-isolating and new contact cases identified. If someone is notified as a contact prior to December 14 initially they will be legally bound by a 14 day self-isolation period however once the change comes into force this will reduce to 10 days.

This means if on Monday you are on your 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> day of self-isolation, you will be able to stop self-isolating

- **Why are we not reducing the time you have to self-isolate if you have tested positive?**

This was recently updated to reflect the latest evidence. 10 days is the right amount of time.

- **What about plans to replace self-isolation with rapid testing?**

The government plans to introduce frequent testing as an alternative to the need for self-isolation for people who have had close contact with someone who has COVID-19. Instead, contacts will be offered regular tests as an alternative to isolation and only have to self-isolate if they test positive.

This will be trialled in Liverpool first, then some institutional settings (e.g. the NHS, care homes, education, employers) before the end of the year, ahead of rollout across the country from early next year.

- **What does the WHO recommend for self isolation? Is it different to this?**

WHO guidance on isolation reads;

Isolation is used for people with COVID-19 symptoms or who have tested positive for the virus. Being in isolation means being separated from other people, ideally in a medically facility where you can receive clinical care. If isolation in a medical facility is not possible and you are not in a high risk group of developing severe disease, isolation can take place at home. If you have symptoms, you should remain in isolation for at least 10 days plus an additional 3 days without symptoms. If you are infected and do not develop symptoms, you should remain in isolation for 10 days from the time you test positive. [Source WHO]

- **Is this in line with other EU countries?**

The approach being taken by England and, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is in line with approaches being taken across the EU. You would expect some variation in approach but self-isolation ranges across the EU from 7-14 days.

- **Is the CDC recommending 10 days?**

Local public health authorities determine and establish the quarantine options for their jurisdictions. CDC currently recommends a quarantine period of 14 days. However, based on local circumstances and resources, the following options to shorten quarantine are acceptable alternatives.

Quarantine can end after Day 10 without testing and if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring.

- With this strategy, residual post-quarantine transmission risk is estimated to be about 1% with an upper limit of about 10%.

### **International arrivals:**

- **Doesn't this make the new upcoming test and release system redundant?**

No. Test to Release for International Arrivals allows international arrivals to opt to pay to take a test on day five of their self-isolation period, and be released from self-isolation upon receipt of a negative test result. This could therefore shorten self-isolation time by up to 5 days.

- **Will people even get test results before the 10 days are up?**

Tests for Test to Release for International Travel must be from a private provider. Timings will therefore be dependent on the service offered by an individual's chosen provider.

- **Have you consulted airports, private providers and travel providers about this change?**

We have worked closely with travel operators and private test providers in the run up to Test to Release launching. We do not believe that there is a significant impact on the changes to self-isolation time on Test to Release, as it will still offer the option to shorten self-isolation by up to 5 days.

- **Why do you not introduce a similar scheme of early test and release for domestic contacts?**

We continue to keep under review the domestic policy including by trialling new technologies

- **How will you get this message out to arrivals into the UK?**

Arrivals to the UK will continue to be signposted to relevant and up to date guidance on self-isolation at every stage of their journey, and via SMS upon arrival.

The Passenger Information Regulations will be updated to include this change. Operators are required to give this information on the self-isolation period to passengers to whom it may apply.

### **NHS Covid-19 App**

- **Will the app be ready to update from the 14th?**

The NHS Covid-19 app will tell close contacts to isolate for 10 full days instead of 14 days from Thursday 17 December not Monday 14th

- **Why has the app not updated?**

This is due to the time taken to test technical changes.

We are continually working to update and improve the NHS Covid-19 app.

The NHS Covid-19 app will be updated to reflect changes to isolation policy as soon as possible.

- **Why does it take almost a week to bring this change about?**

This is due to the time taken to make and test technical changes.

- **If I receive an app notification between 14th and 17th should I take 3 days off my isolation timer?**

In England, if you receive a notification from the NHS Covid-19 app before 17 December to isolate because you have been in contact with someone who has tested positive

- if you have also been contacted by NHS Test and Trace you must follow isolation guidance provided by contact tracers.
- If you have been advised to isolate by the app (and not by NHS Test and Trace) then you can leave isolation when your isolation countdown timer says 3 days.

If you experience symptoms you should continue isolating and book a test.

If you have been notified to app as a result of inputting symptoms or inputting a positive test result you should continue to isolate until the app releases you.

**If I have a close contact between the 14th and 17th but am notified after the 17th will my isolation be for 14 or 10 days?**

- If you are notified by the app after the 17th the updated countdown will apply