

UPDATE / NEWS

Hi. I hope everyone is keeping well and warm. It's fun to walk down our streets and see people's decorations.

Covid 19 in Croydon

In the run up to a national holiday I'm loathe to be the bearer of bad news but in the long term facing reality is better than ignoring it. So here you have it - the number of new cases in Croydon in the last week is up 77% on the previous week.

Covid 19 and Christmas festivities

Most of us will be aware that the Government is still allowing for a limited relaxation of Covid 19 rules over Christmas. They are, however, advising us to exercise extreme caution and personal responsibility.

Here are some tips for a safe Christmas from the Covid 19 Symptom Study (based at King's College London).

1. Spot all the symptoms of COVID-19

[There's more to COVID-19 than the three 'classic' symptoms](#) of fever, persistent cough and loss of smell or taste. One in five people never have these. So although we have logged over 20 symptoms related to COVID, you should also look out for these:

- *Headache*
- *Fatigue*
- *Loss of appetite*
- *Muscle pains*
- *Diarrhoea*
- *Confusion (delirium)*
- *Skin rash*

If you develop any symptoms that might be COVID-19, don't take a risk - you and your household [must isolate immediately and ideally get a test as soon as possible](#).

2. Test your senses

Loss of smell or taste is one of the key early symptoms of COVID-19 and is the best predictor of infection. You can easily test yourself every day by taking a good sniff of something strong-smelling, such as coffee or scented candles or soap.

Check out our videos featuring our supporters Dame Judi Dench, Dame Emma Thompson, and Robert Lindsay sniffing their favourite things. Why not share with

your family and friends to encourage them to test their sense of smell too before you all meet up?

3. Stick to your Christmas bubble

Make sure you follow the guidelines on social gatherings in your area. Avoid mixing too much between households and, in the UK, stick to your 'Christmas bubble' between December 23 and 27. [Check your tier and the rules in your area here.](#)

Even if you follow all the rules, there's still a risk you might transmit the virus to vulnerable friends or family members.

4. Elbow bump your Gran this Christmas

She's dying for a kiss and a cuddle, but opt safer ways to show affection to family members, like bumping elbows or sending an air kiss from across the room.

[Social distancing, washing your hands frequently, and wearing a face covering](#) can all help protect your loved ones and stop the virus from spreading.

Many people who catch coronavirus don't develop any symptoms, but they can still be infectious and pass it on to other people. We know it's tough, but try and limit close contact like hugging and kissing.

5. Celebrate outdoors

[Ventilation is an important factor in disease spread.](#) Because COVID-19 spreads in small airborne droplets, transmission is easier in closed, indoor environments.

Research has shown that being in a room with fresh air can reduce the risk of infection by over 70%. If you can, take your gathering outside to the garden or open as many windows as possible. Walking daily with the family outside as much as possible is another way to stay healthy.

6. Eat well and be merry

It's been a strange year, and we all deserve some time to relax and enjoy some Christmas cheer. Eating well to [nourish your body](#) and [look after your gut health](#) will help you stay healthy through the festive season.

[Your gut microbiome \(the bugs that live in your gut\) forms an essential part of your immune system.](#)

One of the best ways to support your microbiome is to make sure you eat a diverse range of plants. Luckily this includes many traditional Christmas staples like Brussels sprouts, potatoes, parsnips, carrots, mixed nuts and fruits and berries as well as fermented foods like cheese. Even dark chocolate and red wine (in moderation) are good for your gut health - so tuck in and enjoy!

You can also find some more information and tips on reducing the risk of passing on Covid 19 at [Click here](#) and [another clip](#) .

You can find information on [Tier 3 restrictions here](#).

New strain of Covid 19 virus

There have been headlines and plenty of social media chat around the fact that a new strain of Covid 19 has been found. Some attention grabbing headlines have bordered on horror, presumably to boost paper sales or internet hits. With the way in which some sections of the media have used words like 'mutant', 'fear', 'super strain', 'fast-spreading', 'fuelling a rapid rise in cases', 'nightmare' - they have made it sound as though an Alien-type menace is becoming even more sinister and threatening. Not that I would imply the motivation for this approach is to make money!

In fact – it's a natural thing to happen. Viruses mutate the whole time. That's why new flu vaccines are produced each year. Scientists will be studying the latest Covid 19 mutation and any subsequent mutations to see if any routine tweaks to vaccines may (or may not) need to be made.

There is no evidence that the new strain is the sole or main reason for the increase in Covid 19 cases. Human behaviour is likely the biggest cause.

Vaccinations in our area

Vaccinations have started in the South West London NHS area in which we live. They have been taking place at Croydon University Hospital and St George's. The first wave of vaccinations are for care home residents aged 80 as well as care home workers and NHS staff at higher risk. During December and January vaccinations will begin to be administered from GP-led primary care groups (eg GP surgeries). The vaccinations will be given to those deemed most at risk first, then in order according to risk. When our turn comes, we will be contacted.

Please see the attached jpegs:

Covid 19 – Why do I have to wait for my Covid-19 vaccine?

Covid19 – A guide for adults

If you're having difficulty paying for the basics

If you are having difficulty paying for the basics, whether it's because you're self-isolating and unable to work from home, on furlough or unemployed, there is help available.

If you are having difficulty paying bills

For information on options for a wide variety of bills, rent and mortgage, see

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/if-you-cant-pay-your-bills-because-of-coronavirus/>

Food

If you need help with buying essential shopping and / or picking up medication, we have a number of people in our two roads who have volunteered to do this. Please just contact me on annebridge175@gmail.com .

The website of our MP, Sarah Jones, has a handy list in one place of [Food Banks in Croydon](#). If you would like to donate food, do please check out the opening times and, where stated, the kind of food or goods they need.

<https://croydon.foodbank.org.uk/get-help/faq/>

Christmas and New Year bin collections and other Council services

[Click here](#) for the revised Christmas and New Year collection dates

[Click here](#) for information on other Croydon Council services over Christmas and New Year

HINTS AND TIPS

Mistletoe

There may not be so much kissing under the Mistletoe this year but have you noticed how much Mistletoe grows in our area? Just look up. Towards the top of Canning Road, outside Gloucester Lodge, there are two trees with balls of Mistletoe. At the top of Clyde Road, on the triangle by the junction with traffic lights, there is a tree with balls of Mistletoe. There's quite a bit up Radcliffe Road and other local roads.

What is Mistletoe?

Mistletoe is in fact a parasitic plant with white berries that grows on certain trees. In Britain the two main tree hosts are apple and lime. Certainly the trees it is growing on in Canning Road are lime trees. They are only partly parasitic because they have green leaves that can [photosynthesise](#) light energy into chemicals needed by the plant. From the host tree they take water and minerals.

The leaves and berries contain toxins so not something to be eaten or made into a herbal tea!

Traditions around Mistletoe

There are very many traditions around Mistletoe originating from different groups in Europe. These include Norse, Roman, Greek, Celts including Druids. The kissing tradition took off firstly in English speaking countries in the 18th and 19th century, then in other parts of the World. The theory is that it was inspired by the fertility traditions around Mistletoe.

Its existence and use is not confined to Europe. According to Wikipedia *'From at least the mid-19th century, Caribbean herbalists of African descent have referred to mistletoe as "god-bush". In Nepal, diverse mistletoes are used for a variety of medical purposes, particularly for treating broken bones.'*

Yes – there is actually a [website run by a Mistletoe enthusiast](#) full of all kinds of information.

Please see attached jpeg for pics of Mistletoe in Canning and Clyde Roads.

TO MAKE YOU SMILE

For some festive cheer – please see the attached mp4 of the Bottle Boys and their unique performance Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer.

Whatever you are planning on doing over Christmas, I hope you have an enjoyable time.

RELIABLE SOURCES OF ACCURATE INFORMATION

Croydon Council services

<https://www.croydon.gov.uk/healthsocial/phealth/coronavirus-information/service-updates>

Test and Trace and If you have to self-isolate in Croydon

<https://new.croydon.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-and-service-updates/test-and-trace-keeping-croydon-safe/keeping-croydon-safe>

National – furlough, self-employed, small businesses, benefits, housing

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Job Help

<https://jobhelp.campaign.gov.uk/>
[Seven key tips for finding a job](#)

Health

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Money

<https://new.croydon.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-and-service-updates/get-help-your-council-tax-and-benefits>

<https://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en>

<https://www.turn2us.org.uk/>

<https://www.fca.org.uk/>

Citizens Advice

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you/>

Shelter

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/coronavirus