

Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 16 December 2020



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BY [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

It is just a week since the United Kingdom began the biggest vaccination programme in our history.

And the public is coming forward at an extraordinary pace to get a jab, to protect themselves,

beginning with the elderly and the most vulnerable.

With 138,000 recipients of the first dose – and more joining them every minute – there is no doubt we are winning and we will win our long struggle against this virus

which makes it all the more important that we hold our nerve this winter.

Because we are now in a race to protect us all while doing everything we can to keep the virus under control.

And thanks to the colossal collective effort in November

we did bring the R below 1

we did get the infection rate down.

But I must be frank with you

we are already seeing worrying rises in some parts of the country:

Kent is still seeing rising infections

the number of cases in London is at 270 per 100,000 people.

And that's why we acted quickly by moving London into Tier 3

from today.

And tomorrow the Health Secretary will announce the outcome of the latest tiering review.

And so like every other European country facing similar challenges

we have come to this moment, a great global festival

a turning point, a time of year that is of immense emotional and spiritual importance.

But also a moment for us to exercise extreme caution

when we must remember that one of the most striking features of this virus is that it spreads invisibly from people who don't even have symptoms

which is in fact around 1 in 3 of everyone infected.

And that's why from the beginning this virus has been so hard to fight and that's why it's so important to follow the rules

and why this Christmas it's vital that everyone exercises the greatest possible personal responsibility.

And having looked at the latest data – with our colleagues in the Devolved Administrations, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland,

we have decided that the overall situation is alas worse and more challenging than we had hoped when we first set the rules.

So while it would not be right to criminalise people who have made plans and simply want to spend time with their loved ones,

we are all collectively across the UK, governments at every level,

asking you to think hard and in detail about the days ahead

and whether you can do more to protect yourself and others.

We are keeping the laws the same – but we all want to send the same message:

a smaller Christmas is going to be a safer Christmas, and a shorter Christmas is a safer Christmas.

When we say three households can meet on five days,

I want to stress these are maximums, not targets to aim for.

And of course it is always going to be safest to minimise the number of people you meet.

And that means that if you are visiting others over Christmas, we are asking you – in the five days beforehand, as early as this Friday –

to reduce the number of people you are in contact with to the lowest possible

because this virus spreads from human contact.

If possible don't travel from a high prevalence to a low prevalence area

and avoid staying away from home overnight if you can.

Remember, the vaccine is on the way and our aim is to inoculate everyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable or elderly in the early months of next year.

So if you're elderly, the best way to minimise your personal risk is to wait to be vaccinated before spending time indoors with others.

And if you have an elderly relative, you might want to delay seeing them until they've been vaccinated.

And whatever your plans for Christmas, please think carefully about avoiding crowds in the Boxing Day Sales

And no one should be gathering in large groups to see in the New Year – remember the rules in your local area will apply.

In most places across the UK, I'm afraid that means you cannot mix with other households indoors.

All the information about how best to protect yourself and your loved ones is being made available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

So have yourselves a merry little Christmas

And I'm afraid this year I do mean little

But with the vaccine, and all the other measures that we are taking,

We do know things will be better in this country by Easter

And I'm sure that next year Christmas will be as normal for every family in the country.

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