



Glossary: Covid-19 Terms

Here are some of the new terms, words and jargon being used during the Covid-19 pandemic and as Scotland moves through the phases of Lockdown.

Sometimes these new terms and uses of language can be a bit of a puzzle: they mean something a bit different to what we are used to, or we wonder where a word or term comes from, and why.

Things can also be confusing because in Scotland not all the terms we hear in the news apply to us.

Sometimes terms used in the media sound a bit alarming and it can be helpful to know more about what they are based on.

This glossary is explained from, and for, an autistic perspective (as far as this is possible, given the diversity of the autistic experience!). At the end, we've added some good websites with terms that we haven't necessarily included here.

Any word or term in bold and inverted commas (e.g. '**Furlough**') is listed separately.

Glossary

Active travel – using physical activity to get to places. For example walking and cycling.

Anosmia - loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell. In the UK this was identified as an additional Covid-19 [symptom](#) in May 2020.

Antibody test – this shows whether a person has had an illness and become immune to it.

These tests cannot say whether someone is immune to Covid-19. Antibody tests can be bought, but their use is doubtful. [The NHS in Scotland isn't using them](#) because they don't show if someone is immune and, depending on how recently you had Covid-19, they may not show '**Antibodies**'. [The Scottish Government is only using them to provide statistical information](#).

Antigen test – proper name for a test of whether someone has a virus. If you have Covid-19 symptoms, you can request a test (see our [Test and Protect resources](#)). In Scotland, you need to be aged over 5 to get one. The test should be done as soon as possible, but won't work more than 5 days after symptoms start. You may be able to request a home testing kit or use a drive through testing centre where trained staff do the test. The test involves taking a '**Swab**' (see below). Read more on testing in Scotland [here](#).

Asymptomatic – this means having an illness without showing symptoms. Someone might have no symptoms at all, or not yet have symptoms (this is called ‘pre-symptomatic’). Although there is not enough research to show for sure, it seems that Covid-19 can be passed from someone who is asymptomatic to other people without knowing it. Read more [here](#). Also see ‘**Silent-spreaders/super-carriers**’.

Close contact – Close contact with a person infected with Covid-19 increases one’s chance of catching it. The [Scottish Government says](#):
‘A close contact can be defined as someone living in the same household, someone who had direct or physical contact with an infected person, or someone who has remained within two metres of the patient for longer than 15 minutes’.
People who have passed the patient in the street or in a shop are at very low risk ...’

COBRA or COBR – this is nothing to do with a venomous snake! It stands for Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms. This is where crises and emergencies, such as the Covid-19 outbreak, are discussed by Government committees.

Contact Tracing – the process that finds out the contact details of a person who has tested positive for Covid-19. Staff called Contact Tracers do this. They then contact these people and advise them to self-isolate for 14 days (see our [Test and Protect resources](#)).

Contagious – something that is easily spread from one person to another. Covid-19 is a contagious disease. (The word contagious is also sometimes used to mean that a nice thing, like happiness, can spread from one person to another).

Coronavirus – this is the name for the family of viruses that cause respiratory illnesses like colds, flu and SARS.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme – see ‘**Furlough**’.

Covid-19 – short for Coronavirus disease. The ‘19’ identifies it as starting in 2019. Its full name is: ‘[novel coronavirus severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 \(SARS-CoV-2\)](#)’. The word ‘novel’ means that it is a new virus.

Critical childcare – certain schools and nurseries remaining open for specific groups of children: those whose parents hold certain key worker jobs and those who are the most vulnerable or in need of support. See the individual local authorities’ websites for local information.

Dexamethasone – new research (June 2020) shows this cheap, commonly available drug can significantly reduce deaths of Covid-19 patients who are seriously ill in hospital and on oxygen or mechanical ventilation. It does not help patients with milder symptoms. [Read more from the WHO](#).

Extended Households – similar to the English term, ‘**Support bubble**’. People living on their own or with children under 18 can now visit or stay with another ‘**Household**’, subject to some [important rules](#).

Face covering – any form of cover over one’s nose and mouth which helps to reduce the spread of germs. This is because Covid-19 can be spread in the water droplets from talking, coughing, sneezing, etc.

Face coverings include manufactured face masks and homemade coverings. In Scotland face coverings are now mandatory on public transport and in shops. *If someone has difficulty wearing a face covering, it doesn't need to be worn.* [Here](#) is information on why this would be. For an autistic person, the following listed reason may be the most relevant:

'You have a health condition where a face covering would be inappropriate because it would cause difficulty, pain or severe distress or anxiety or because you cannot apply a covering and wear it in the proper manner safely and consistently.'

[Also see our face coverings resources.](#)

Face masks – disposable single use masks that can be purchased. These come in several grades. Surgical and medical masks should be reserved for NHS staff.

Face visor or shield – a plastic covering over the face to help protect the wearer. These are part of the 'PPE' used by workers like NHS staff.

FACT campaign – The [Scottish government's message on saying safe](#). FACT stands for:

- 'Face coverings in enclosed spaces
- Avoid crowded places
- Clean hands and surfaces regularly
- Two metre distancing; and
- Self-isolate and book a test if you have symptoms.

Remember these FACTS and that will help all of us to stay safe and protect each other as well.'

Flattening the curve – this term is best understood by looking at this [visual](#).

The tall curve shows a lot of people infected around the same time. This is difficult for the NHS to cope with.

The flatter, longer, curve shows fewer people being infected at any one time. The NHS can cope with this better.

By using infection control methods, like physical distancing, the number of cases at any one time is reduced. Scotland currently has a flattened curve.

Furlough – an American term that is now being used in the UK through the '**Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**'.

The UK Government is providing grant funding to employers who cannot pay their staff during '**Lockdown**'. Employers can then give their staff paid leave called furlough. The [UK's furlough scheme](#) ends in October.

Hand sanitiser/gel –this needs to be *alcohol based* in order to be effective against Covid-19. Small containers can be bought for carrying around and larger containers (which are more economical) are also available.

Home testing kits – if you have Covid-19 [symptoms](#), you can [travel to a testing station](#) or request a [home testing kit](#) to be delivered to your house. It will be picked up by courier the next day. Also see our [Test and Protect resources](#).

Hotspots – places where there is more likelihood of passing on Covid-19 e.g. where there are lots of people fairly close together.

Household – One or more people living in a house or a flat or another type of accommodation.

Hygiene measures – [things we can do to reduce the chance of infection](#), such as avoiding touching surfaces that others have touched; frequent hand washing; use of hand sanitiser and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are frequently touched.

Isolating – Staying away from other people if one has a contagious infection, to avoid spreading it. This is different to ‘**Self Isolating**’ and ‘**Quarantine**’.

K number/value – Used to find out if some people are spreading Covid-19 more than others.

The K number, or value, is often mentioned in the media when talking about ‘super-spreaders’. A low K number, below 1, suggests that a few people are infecting a lot of people. Read more from [the BBC](#) and [The Conversation](#).

Lockdown – when people need to stay in an area or building due to an emergency. The term comes from situations where people are literally locked in with a key (as happens in jails). This is different to Covid-19 lockdown.

The Covid-19 lockdown has been made into law, with guidance on how much people can leave their homes and areas.

Phases - the Scottish Government developed 5 phases for coming out of lockdown (lockdown followed by phases 1-4). Also see ‘**Route map**’.

The date when each phase is introduced depends on how many new cases of Covid-19 there are (the **R-factor**).

Every 3 weeks the Scottish Government decides whether to move to the next phase, stay the same, or go back a phase. They also decide whether to put everything in the phase in place, or only some of it. [Detailed version here](#). [Easy read version here](#).

Physical distancing – this includes [measures](#) on how to meet people safely and stay 2 meters apart from others you don’t live with (this may reduce to 1 meter or 1.5 meters *if research supports it*). Sometimes physical distancing is still referred to as ‘**Social Distancing**’.

PPE – stands for Personal Protective Equipment.

This protects the wearer and the person they are with from passing germs to each other. Used by workers who need to be close to other people, especially NHS, emergency responders and some carers. PPE includes face masks, shields and respirators, disposable gloves, hand sanitiser and aprons.

Quarantine – Whether someone is ill or not, this is the requirement to stay at home or *somewhere else* to avoid possibly spreading a contagious disease.

Cruise ships were quarantined to prevent infected passengers from leaving and spreading the infection.

At the time of writing, people entering the UK from overseas still have to [quarantine themselves for 14 days](#) but this is likely to change from 10th July for some countries. The situation in Scotland may vary to other parts of the UK, depending on infection levels.

Read the difference between 'quarantine' and 'Isolating' [here](#).

R number or value – is the [average reproduction number](#).

This means how many people *on average* will get Covid-19 from one person. If the R number stays below 1 this is good. It means, *on average*, that each infected person infects less than 1 person. Therefore Covid-19 is reducing and the Government may be able to go to the next phase for coming out of lockdown. Also see 'K number'.

Recovery Phase – the period of four phases of easing the lockdown restrictions in Scotland.

Remote working – working from home.

Remdesivir – An anti-viral drug recently (May 2020) identified as helping certain Covid-19 patients.

[According to research](#) the benefits for some patients are a reduction in time and less need for support such as mechanical ventilation. However, it is not known which patients benefit most from it. Also, it does not seem to prevent deaths.

Roadmap – The UK Government's plan for recovering from lockdown.

You may also hear it called [Our plan to rebuild](#). Scotland, and the other devolved administrations within the UK, also have their own plans (see 'Routemap').

Route map – The Scottish Government's name for their written plan of the 'route' Scotland will take out of lockdown. The [route map](#) (or plan) isn't fixed – it will be updated as the situation with Covid-19 changes. Also see 'Phases'.

Self-isolating – staying in your home to prevent yourself catching or spreading Covid-19 (if you have it). This is different to 'Shielding'.

Shielding/shielded people – UK term for people who may become dangerously ill if they catch Covid-19. These people need to stay at home, away from other people who might pass Covid-19 to them.

The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) sends letters to every person who needs to shield. They will also get letters saying when it is safe to go out, and what for (e.g. outdoor exercise). Shielded people can get Government help with essential supplies like food (see 'Weekly grocery packs').

[Here](#) are clear guidelines on the criteria and process for shielding.

Silent-spreaders/super-spreaders – this slightly alarming term has been used a lot in the media to suggest that 'Asymptomatic' people rapidly spread Covid-19, especially at busy events. It is not known how much this might be happening. Following social distancing, wearing face coverings and hygiene measures may help to reduce our worries. Keeping up to date with reliable news sources may also help.

Social distancing – also see 'Physical distancing'.

The term 'physical distancing' is now being used more than 'social distancing'. This is because we are being asked to keep *physically apart* from people who are not in our households.

Many people find social contact important for their mental health. Some autistic people are finding it pleasant to be physically distanced from others, while some miss their social routines and contacts. There are ways that we can still have social contact while being physically distant, for example by phone, social media or keeping a safe physical distance.

Stay safe/keep safe – a lot of people are saying this these days. They might also write it at the end of a message or letter. You may also hear it on the news. This usually means that they hope that you keep yourself safe from Covid-19. The Scottish Government recently moved from saying 'stay at home' to 'stay safe'. Also see '**FACT campaign**'.

Support bubble a term used in England, not Scotland. This describes where a person who lives alone may visit and/or stay with one other household. This is to help with feelings of loneliness and isolation in people living alone. In Scotland, a similar term is '**Extended households**'.

Swab – used to carry out Covid-19 testing. A long cotton bud is used to take a swab sample from the back of one's throat and nose. [Here](#) is an 'easy read' description of the test, with photographs.

The test shouldn't hurt, however if one is extra sensitive to some types of touch it may feel uncomfortable or even sore. If you need to get tested and worry it may hurt, you could discuss this. A home testing kit may help, if you can get one. Then you could do the swab yourself, in your own time and environment. Also see below:

Test and Protect – The Scottish Government's [process for reducing the spread of Covid-19](#). See our [Test and Protect resources](#)

Vaccine – a substance that gives people immunity to some diseases. A lot of research is taking place to create a vaccine that will protect us from Covid-19.

Vulnerable people – those who are at [higher risk](#) of catching Covid-19.

Weekly grocery packs - Free basic food boxes, delivered to those who are shielding or, in certain circumstances, in extreme need. Read more [here](#).

Wheel (as in 'walk, wheel, cycle') – wheelchair, mobility scooter and similar.

Useful Covid-19 terms websites:

BBC: [Coronavirus: Jargon buster and other things you need to know](#)

Young Scot: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Jargonbuster](#)

WHO: [Q&A on coronaviruses \(COVID-19\)](#)

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