

Coronavirus questions: 25/03

The coronavirus situation changes so rapidly, it can be hard to keep up to date – let alone inform and support your community.

As one of our valued Members, we want to ensure you have the most useful information and advice at your fingertips, whatever happens. This sheet serves as a kind of introductory FAQ – but we're keen to hear what you need to know.

What isn't clear to you and your colleagues right now? What are parents asking you about? We can provide answers – just **get in touch with us via dshelp@parentzone.org.uk** and we'll respond to as many as we can in the next edition of Coronavirus Questions – available exclusively to you as a Member.

What do all these new phrases actually mean?

- **Containment:** when a society focuses on limiting the spread of a disease by monitoring it and isolating those who have been infected by or exposed to it. Considered one of the first stages of responding to an outbreak. The UK moved from containment to *delay* – the next stage – on 12th March.
- **Coronavirus:** technically, a large family of viruses which includes the current strain – but often used to describe that strain itself, or the disease it causes. Common symptoms of coronaviruses are respiratory problems, a cough and a fever. See also: *COVID-19, Sars-CoV-2*
- **COVID-19:** technically, the disease caused by the current strain of *coronavirus* (just like AIDS is the disease caused by the virus HIV) – but often used to describe that strain itself. See also: *Coronavirus, Sars-CoV-2*
- **Delay:** when a society focuses on slowing down the spread of a disease by, for example, limiting public gatherings. Considered one of the subsequent stages of responding to an outbreak, when *containment* is no longer practical. See also: *Flattening the curve*
- **Epidemic:** when a disease spreads from person to person across a region or community.
- **Epidemiology:** the study of how diseases spread in a population.
- **Essential/key workers:** people who do jobs that are deemed necessary for society and will continue going to work during *lockdown*, including health professionals.
- **Flattening the curve:** slowing down the number of new infections by – in this case – encouraging people to stay indoors and avoid unnecessary contact with others. (Imagine a graph in which the number of cases rises less steeply over time.) See also: *Delay*

- **Herd immunity:** when a large proportion of the population becomes immune to a disease – especially through vaccination – making further spread difficult. The government’s initial plan seemed to be based on a controversial interpretation of herd immunity, in which a majority of Britons would continue their lives as normal rather than following *social distancing*. As a result, around 60% would catch the current strain of *coronavirus* quickly and (theoretically) prevent more infections – but critics suggested this would overwhelm the NHS and cause thousands of unnecessary deaths. Since 23rd March, the government has moved closer to the kind of *lockdown* practised in Italy and elsewhere.
- **Lockdown:** a series of rules designed to stop people from leaving their homes and/or a particular area. On the evening of 23rd March, the prime minister announced new measures that many have interpreted as a lockdown.
- **Pandemic:** when a disease spreads from person to person across a large area or the whole world. The World Health Organization declared the current situation to be a pandemic.
- **Panic buying:** when people buy things in unusually large quantities, because they are worried about a crisis or shortage (perceived or real).
- **Public health:** a branch of science related to the health of populations, including collective hygiene, *epidemiology* and disease prevention.
- **Quarantine:** staying indoors and avoiding unnecessary contact with others when you have tested positive for *COVID-19*, or think you may have it.
- **Sars-CoV-2:** the current strain of *coronavirus* which causes the disease *COVID-19* (just like HIV is the virus that causes the disease AIDS). See also: *Coronavirus*, *COVID-19*
- **Self isolation:** staying indoors and avoiding unnecessary contact with others when you have been exposed to the virus but don’t have symptoms.
- **Social distancing:** a series of measures to avoid unnecessary contact with others when you haven’t been exposed to the virus, including staying indoors and keeping a certain distance from other people when you do go out.
- **Vaccine:** a substance designed to provide immunity to a disease – often administered by injection.
- **Ventilator:** a medical device that helps patients breathe, used in the treatment of severe cases of *COVID-19*.
- **Wet market:** a kind of market where fresh produce – including recently slaughtered animals – is sold. The word ‘wet’ refers to the use of water to hose down stalls and floors etc. The current strain of *coronavirus* is thought to have been transmitted from an animal to a human via a wet market in *Wuhan*.
- **Wuhan:** a city in China, where the current strain of *coronavirus* is thought to have originated.
- **Zoonotic diseases:** diseases that are transmitted from animals to people, such as the current strain of *coronavirus*, malaria and rabies.

Is panic-buying widespread?

Although the emptiness of your local Tesco might seem drastic, it's not clear how far panic-buying is to blame.

According to [recent reports](#), UK supermarkets' revenue has gone up by about £1bn (roughly 10%) over three weeks – which sounds like a lot, but isn't the huge increase you might expect if everyone was filling their trolleys twice over. The supply chain is designed to provide goods 'just in time' rather than having lots of reserve stock, so it only takes a relatively small, unexpected increase to cause shortages on the shelves.

Some argue that while a minority of individuals might indeed be hoarding specific things, a majority of people are getting a bit extra to reflect the fact that they're spending more time at home, visiting shops and cafes less frequently and preparing for total quarantine if someone in the house develops the disease.

Either way, retailers and the government are advising people to only buy what they need – and many shops are introducing measures such as priority hours for elderly customers and limits on certain products in order to manage demand.

What's happening with exams?

You probably know more about this than us! But here's a handy way to summarise the situation for parents: exams for SATs, GCSEs, A-levels and most other qualifications have been cancelled. Students will be awarded 'calculated grades' by their teachers, which will take mock exams, non-exam assessments and other work into account. We've written an [article](#) about this for parents – feel free to share it.

Is coronavirus affecting the planet?

Satellite imagery shows [reduced pollution levels](#) in China, Italy, the UK and elsewhere during the pandemic. It's unsurprising, really, given that factories are shutting down and fewer vehicles are on the roads.

Many local areas are certainly quieter and calmer now – and there's nothing wrong with enjoying that. However, while it might be tempting to believe that nature is 'reclaiming' the earth, we should take some of the feel-good animal stories circulating on social media with a [pinch of salt](#). While the waters in Venetian canals are genuinely clearer, swans often swim in them – and the famous dolphins were snapped in Sardinia instead of Venice. The charming news of elephants getting drunk on corn wine in southwestern China has also been debunked.

Does fresh air help?

In general, it's good to get outside and stay active during the lockdown. As of 23rd March, everyone can go out for one form of exercise per day by themselves or with members of their household. So it's perfectly fine for parents and children to run or cycle together! If you have a garden, now's a good time to make the most of it. Public parks are remaining open at the moment, but you should aim to keep 6ft apart from other people, like before.

Because the current strain of coronavirus is mostly passed through cough droplets in the air, it might be tempting for city-based people to go to less densely populated places like the countryside. However, all non-essential travel should be avoided for now – and rural hospitals might [struggle to accommodate](#) an influx of new visitors.