



COVID-19 patient advice FAQs

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Background

This document has been prepared in response to the numerous patient and professional queries received through social media and direct phone contact. It is intended to support the ENT UK documents produced and is aimed at the layperson. It is presented in a Q&A format.

Questions and answers

Q: I have a new cough but no other symptoms; should I isolate from the rest of my family?

A: Yes. As per present guidelines, you should self-isolate from rest of your family who should also be isolating at home as per present UK government instructions.

Q: I have lost my sense of smell but otherwise feel fine. Do I have COVID-19 and should I self-isolate from family?

A: It is reasonable to assume that the new loss sense of smell (anosmia) is COVID-19-related and you should follow guidelines for self-isolation from the rest of your family group.

Q: I have lost my sense of smell. When is it likely to come back?

A: Reports from other countries such as Italy seems to suggest that COVID-19-related loss to your sense of smell should return within 7-14 days. It is of course possible that the loss is due to other causes such as sinusitis, or other viral infections, but those also have good rates of recovery.

Q: I normally take nasal steroid sprays and have now lost my sense of smell. Can I continue taking them?

A: Yes, you can. There is some evidence that oral steroids can make the severity of COVID-19 infections worse, so although oral steroids have previously been used in people with new symptoms of anosmia, we would not recommend these at the present time.

Q: I am a key worker without direct patient contact, but live with others with pre-existing conditions. Can I still go to work?

A: Yes, you can. As long as neither you nor any member of the household is experiencing any symptoms, you may go to work and observe all social distancing rules on your journey.

Q: If I think I have had COVID-19, can I stop self-isolating from family after 7 days, even if I don't feel back to normal?

A: Yes, you can. However, if you have deteriorating symptoms, particularly increased shortness of breath, and you are struggling to breathe, you should seek medical advice via 111 or, if very unwell, presenting to hospital.

Q: I am meant to have an ENT operation. Will I still be able to have it?

A: Not at the present time. Most, if not all, elective operations have ceased for the time being so unless you are due to have a cancer-related operation, it is very likely that your operation will be postponed to a later date.

Q: I am meant to have an ENT outpatient appointment. Will this still go ahead?

A: Not at the present time. You may still be contacted by phone to have a virtual/phone consultation, but it is very unlikely that you will be attending clinic. If your appointment is cancelled, it will be rebooked for a later time.

Acknowledgements

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References

1. ENT UK advice for patients with new-onset anosmia during COVID
2. Initial guidance for head and neck cancer management during Covid-19

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