



LATEST COVID-19 CHRISTMAS RULES

Boris Johnson has announced new rules for Christmas in England - you may now only meet people from two other household (or bubble) on Christmas Day.

It is vital that we each take personal responsibility this Christmas to limit the spread of the virus and protect our loved ones, particularly if they are vulnerable. One in three people with coronavirus (COVID-19) have no symptoms and will be spreading it without realising it. So the safest way to celebrate Christmas this year is with your household or existing support bubble in your home. The more people you see, the more likely it is that you will catch or spread coronavirus.

Areas in Tier 4 If you live in a Tier 4 area, you must follow the rules in your tier over the Christmas period. This means that you cannot meet other people indoors, unless you ordinarily live with them, or they are part of your existing support bubble. Outdoors, you can only meet one person from another household.

Areas not in Tier 4 If you do not live in a Tier 4 area, you may see a maximum of two other households (your 'Christmas bubble') on Christmas Day (25 December). You cannot see anyone from a Tier 4 area.

You should think very carefully about the risks and only form a Christmas bubble if you feel you absolutely need to. Wherever possible, discuss alternatives to meeting up in person.

1. Forming a Christmas bubble

Christmas bubbles, support bubbles and childcare bubbles are all different things and have their own specific rules.

You can only form a Christmas bubble if you do not live in a Tier 4 area. If you are permitted to form a Christmas bubble and choose to do so:

- keep your Christmas bubble as small as possible. Two other households is a maximum, not a target
- do not join a Christmas bubble with anyone from a Tier 4 area
- stop all unnecessary social contact outside your immediate household as soon as possible and for at least five days before you meet other households in your bubble
- only meet your Christmas bubble in private homes or in your garden, places of worship, or public outdoor spaces
- only see your bubble on Christmas Day. Do not stay overnight and keep your visits as short as possible
- stay local where possible. Avoid travelling from a high prevalence to a low prevalence area
- only meet people who are not in your Christmas bubble outside your home according to the rules in the tier you



live in (unless coming from a lower to a higher tier) and do not meet socially with friends and family that you do not live with in your home or garden unless they are part of your Christmas bubble

When seeing your Christmas bubble, you should keep taking steps to reduce the spread of the virus. This includes meeting outdoors where possible, ensuring indoor spaces get as much fresh air as possible, making space between members of different households wherever you can, washing your hands regularly and for 20 seconds, and following [rules on self-isolation](#) if you develop symptoms or test positive for coronavirus.

You must not visit another household if you, or anyone in your household, is feeling unwell or self-isolating. You should get [a free NHS test](#) if you have symptoms, have been asked to by your local council or your hospital, or are taking part in a government pilot project.

2. If you are over 70 or clinically extremely vulnerable

It is particularly important to think about the greater risks to more vulnerable people whilst recognising how hard it can be to maintain good physical and mental health without essential contact with family and friends.

If you are over 70 or [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) think carefully about the risks. The safest approach may be not to form a Christmas bubble

If you are permitted to form a Christmas bubble and choose to do so, be especially careful to observe the guidance:

- meet outdoors where possible
- wash your hands regularly
- keep a distance from those you do not live with
- if you meet indoors, ensure good ventilation by letting in fresh air

If you are in an existing household or support bubble with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, the safest approach would be not to join a wider Christmas bubble to help reduce the risks to their health.

2.1 If you're in a support bubble

If you are in an existing support bubble with someone who lives in a Tier 4 area, you can see each other on Christmas Day. If you choose to do so, you must not join a Christmas bubble with anyone else.



Existing support bubbles count as one household towards the three household limit. This means that if you are in a support bubble outside a Tier 4 area, you can collectively form a Christmas bubble with two other households. This applies only to support bubbles as set out in law. You should, however, consider the risks of doing so and keep your Christmas bubble as small as possible.

If you are in a support bubble with someone who is over 70 or clinically extremely vulnerable, think carefully. To help reduce the risks to their health, the safest approach would be to celebrate with your household or support bubble and not with others.

Outside of Tier 4, the two households in a support bubble can choose to join separate Christmas bubbles, but should avoid contact with each other both before and after Christmas Day.

[Read guidance on making and using a support bubble](#)

2.2 If you're in a childcare bubble

You can continue to use a childcare bubble on 25 December, including in a Tier 4 area, but only if reasonably necessary for the purposes of childcare and where there are no reasonable alternatives. If you want to meet socially with the other household in your childcare bubble, you should include them in your Christmas bubble, but can only do so if neither of you live in a Tier 4 area. You and the other household in your childcare bubble would count as two households towards the three household limit for Christmas bubbles.

[Read guidance on making and using a childcare bubble](#)

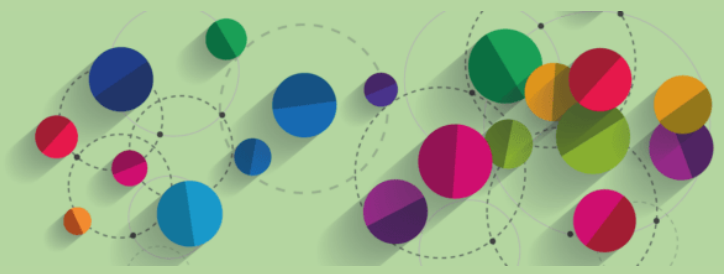
2.3 Separated parents of children under 18

Children (under-18) whose parents do not live together may be part of both parents' Christmas bubbles, if their parents choose to form separate bubbles. Nobody else should be in two bubbles.

If one or both parents live in a Tier 4 area, children may continue to move between their parents' houses, but neither household is permitted to join a Christmas bubble with others.

2.4 Forming a different Christmas bubble to the people you live with normally

If you are permitted to form a Christmas bubble, you are allowed to form a different Christmas bubble from the people



you live with normally. If you and the people you are living with want to be in different Christmas bubbles, you can form a Christmas bubble with that household and one other household (this will count as three households). You should [check the guidance on households where everybody is not in the same Christmas bubble below](#).

2.5 If you're a student who's moved home from university for the holidays

[If you are a student who has moved home for the university holidays](#), you are considered to be part of the household to which you have returned. You are not treated as part of your term-time household for this period.

3. Meeting with your Christmas bubble, and other friends and family

To protect you and your loved ones, think carefully about the risks of forming a bubble. Only do so if you feel you need to. One in three people who have coronavirus (COVID-19) have no symptoms and will be spreading it without realising it. Everybody in a Christmas bubble is responsible for taking clear steps to prevent catching and spreading the virus. If you do not follow these rules, you increase the risk of catching the virus, and spreading it to your friends and family.

You should take particular care to follow this advice if you are in a Christmas bubble with anybody who is vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable. There is [further advice on what to do if you are clinically extremely vulnerable further down this page](#).

3.1 Before forming and meeting your Christmas bubble

If you are permitted to form a Christmas bubble and decide to do so, take precautions to minimise risk by stopping unnecessary social contact outside your immediate household as soon as possible and for at least five days before meeting your Christmas bubble. Workers who cannot work from home may continue to go to their place of work. Any increase in contact with other people increases the risk you will catch or spread coronavirus.

3.2 Meeting your Christmas bubble indoors

If someone is in your Christmas bubble, you can visit each other's homes on 25 December, but must not stay overnight. You can also go to a place of worship together, or meet in public outdoor spaces. You cannot meet your Christmas bubble in any other indoor setting, such as a pub, hotel, shop, theatre, or restaurant. In these settings, rules on who you can and cannot meet depend on your tier.

Do not meet with friends and family that you do not live with in your home or garden unless they are part of your



Christmas bubble. You can continue to meet people who are not in your Christmas bubble outside your home according to the rules [in the tier](#) you live in, but should aim to minimise all non-essential contact. If you travel to a tier with stricter rules than the one you have come from, you should follow the stricter rules that are in place.

There are specific guidelines for those who have chosen to form a different Christmas bubble from the people they normally live with, and for those who choose not to form a Christmas bubble.

We know that it's easier to catch and spread the virus in an indoor space, especially if there is little flow of fresh air. Therefore, when meeting your Christmas bubble you should take these measures to prevent the spread of the virus:

- keep your visits short because the risk of transmission increases the longer you stay
- wash your hands frequently
- clean touch points regularly, such as door handles and surfaces
- keep socially distanced from anybody you do not live with as much as possible
- make sure you let as much fresh air in as you can during a visit and after visitors have left, without getting cold, by opening windows and doors

People may continue to work in other people's homes where necessary, such as for nannies, cleaners or tradespeople. To reduce risk, they should observe social distancing wherever possible, and where it can be avoided should not go into homes that are hosting Christmas bubbles.

3.3 Meeting your Christmas bubble outdoors

You can be with your Christmas bubble in your garden or an outdoor public place. You can continue to meet people who are not in your Christmas bubble outside your home according to [the rules in the tier you are meeting in](#), but should aim to avoid all unnecessary contact during this period.

Outdoor public places include:

- parks, beaches, parts of the countryside open to the general public
- public gardens (whether or not you pay to enter them)
- allotments
- playgrounds

4. Households where everybody is not in the same Christmas bubble



If you have chosen to form a different Christmas bubble from other people in your household - the people you live with normally - you should take additional steps to prevent the opportunity for the virus to spread within your household, and between bubbles.

This might include: taking extra precautions such as cleaning surfaces and contact points like door handles and letting in as much fresh air as possible after someone has visited your household.

5. If you choose not to form a Christmas bubble

If you choose not to form a Christmas bubble, you must continue to follow the rules in your area. In a tier 1 area this would mean that you can see others inside a private dwelling in a group of no more than six, provided that they too are from a tier 1 area and have not formed a Christmas bubble.

You can also continue to see your support bubble if you have one.

6. Self-isolation and Christmas bubbles

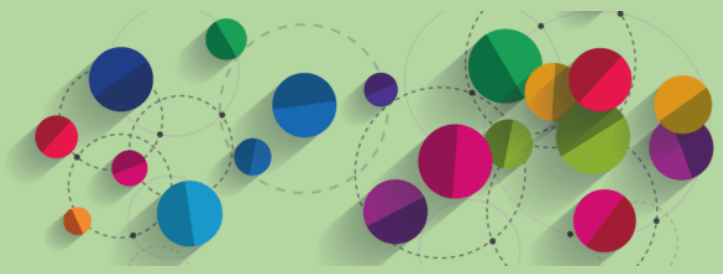
You must also follow [rules on self-isolation](#), which apply if either you, someone you live with, someone in your childcare or support bubble, or someone you have been in contact with, has symptoms or has tested positive for coronavirus. This means you must not form a Christmas bubble if you have coronavirus symptoms or are self-isolating. These rules are the law and you must follow them even if it means not meeting with friends or family for Christmas Day.

If a member of your Christmas bubble tests positive for coronavirus or develops coronavirus symptoms on 25 December, or up to 48 hours after members of the bubble last met, all members of the bubble must [self-isolate](#) as if they were members of the same household.

7. If you are clinically extremely vulnerable

It is particularly important that we all think about the risks to more vulnerable people, whilst recognising how hard it can be to maintain good physical and mental health without essential contact with family and friends. If you do decide to form a Christmas bubble you should take extra precautions set out in [Guidance for the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable](#). Others in your bubble should be mindful of your increased risks and be extra vigilant in the days before you get together.

If you are in an existing household or support bubble with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, think carefully. To help reduce the risks to their health, the safest approach would be to celebrate with your household or



support bubble and not with others.

8. If you are a care home resident

The guidance on care homes applies to England - see guidance for [Wales](#), [Scotland](#), and [Northern Ireland](#).

Spending time with others outside the care home will increase risk of exposure to coronavirus for the resident and the other residents in their home on their return, and is likely to place an additional burden on the care home. Given this, visits out of care homes should only be considered for care home residents of working age. Residents, their families and care homes should very carefully consider whether this is the right thing to do, or whether visiting at the care home would provide meaningful contact in a safer way. [Guidance on care home visits is available](#).

Some residents of working age may be able to leave their care home to form a bubble, in agreement with the home and subject to individual risk assessments. A care home resident may form a bubble with one other household, and should not form a three-household Christmas bubble at any point.

If a care home resident does join a household for Christmas they should maintain social distance, wash hands regularly, and let plenty of fresh air into rooms by opening windows and doors.

Others in the household should take steps to minimise the risk to the care home resident and others in the care home, recognising that introducing coronavirus to a care home puts all those who live and work there at risk. All members of the bubble should:

- take steps to minimise their potential exposure to coronavirus by limiting the number of people they meet for two weeks prior to allowing a care home resident into their household
- talk to the care home about getting tested prior to meeting the care home resident outside the care home. In order to safely return to the care home, the resident will need to be tested and isolated. We will provide further details shortly through the publication of relevant guidance

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9. Travel and overnight stays with your Christmas bubble

You must not visit or leave a Tier 4 area in order to see others over Christmas or on Christmas Day.

If you are in Tier 3 or lower and choose to form a Christmas bubble and choose to do so, you should consider carefully the risks of travelling at all. If you live in an area with the highest level of protection, for example, tier 3 in England, you should avoid travelling to lower prevalence areas where possible.

If you have to travel, book ahead to enable you and others to travel safely and plan your outward and return journeys carefully.

If you plan to travel to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland to form a Christmas bubble, you must follow the rules of that country and should read guidance from [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) or [Northern Ireland](#) before you travel. You cannot leave a Tier 4 area to join a Christmas bubble in a Devolved Administration.

You cannot mix with the other households in your Christmas bubble (unless otherwise permitted by your tier rules) before or after the 25 December except in exceptional circumstances (for example, in the event of unforeseen travel disruption, or if a member of your Christmas bubble develops symptoms of coronavirus and you are required to self-isolate). This includes anyone travelling to or from Northern Ireland.

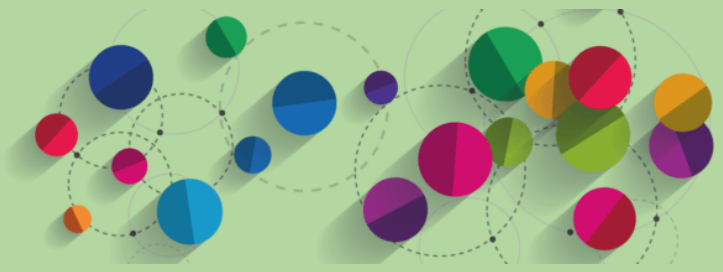
Transport routes may be busier than normal. If you do need to travel, you should:

- plan ahead, check for disruption before you leave, and avoid the busiest routes, as well as busy times
- avoid making unnecessary stops during your journey
- avoid sharing a car with people not in your household or Christmas bubble
- keep your distance from other people when you travel, where possible
- wash or sanitise your hands regularly

If you need to travel with your Christmas bubble, wherever you are, you should follow [Safer travel guidance](#).

[Access further information on travel](#)

Outside a Tier 4 area, you can stay in private rented accommodation, a hotel, hostel or B&B in England over Christmas, in line with the social gathering rules in your tier. This includes in a tier 3: Very High alert area between 24 and 26 December, as long as you are staying by yourself, or with other members of your household and it is necessary for the purposes of seeing your Christmas bubble on Christmas Day. If necessary, you can stay in private rented accommodation with members of your household, or your Christmas bubble.



You should not gather as a Christmas bubble in a hotel, hostel or B&B in any tier unless a member of your bubble lives there permanently. This is also the case for other types of non-private residence (for example an educational establishment or Bed & Breakfast). If this applies to you, do not mix with your Christmas bubble in any shared facilities or spaces, like a restaurant.

If you are travelling to the UK from abroad you and your household may join a Christmas bubble on Christmas Day. However if you normally live abroad and arrive to join friends and family in the UK, you will count as a separate household for the purposes of forming a Christmas bubble.

If you arrive in the UK from or have travelled through a [non-travel corridor country or territory](#) you will need to [self-isolate for 10 days](#), or may [take a test after 5 days of isolation](#) and end your self-isolation after a negative result.

10. After meeting your Christmas bubble

After meeting your Christmas bubble on 25 December, you should reduce your contact with people you do not live with as much as possible. While the rules relevant to your local tier will apply, you should exercise extra caution, and think carefully about whether to meet up with friends or family outside your household. This includes not meeting up with them for New Years Eve, even if you feel well. Around one in three people with coronavirus don't have symptoms, and can still pass it on.

You can go to work if you cannot work from home, but you should avoid unnecessary social interaction. Any increase in contact with other people increases the risk you will catch or spread coronavirus.