

# Covid: Face mask rules and Covid passes to end in England

By Mary O'Connor  
BBC News

Pdf by:  
<https://www.pro-memoria.info>

🕒 28 minutes ago | 💬 [Comments](#)



Coronavirus pandemic



**England's Plan B measures are to end from next Thursday, with advice to work from home and Covid passports both dropped, Boris Johnson has announced.**

Face coverings will no longer be mandatory - with the requirement dropped for secondary pupils in classrooms from tomorrow.

The PM said England was reverting to "Plan A" due to boosters and how

people had followed Plan B measures.

He told MPs that scientists believed the Omicron wave had peaked nationally.

In a statement to MPs in the House of Commons, the prime minister confirmed mandatory Covid passports for entering nightclubs and large events will end, though organisations can choose to use the NHS Covid pass if they wish.

And face masks will no longer be mandated, though people are still advised to wear coverings in enclosed or crowded spaces, particularly when meeting strangers.

From Thursday, secondary school pupils will no longer have to wear face masks in classrooms and the Department of Education will remove guidance on their use in communal areas "shortly", the PM added.

The prime minister also said the government intended to end the legal requirement for people to self-isolate after they test positive for Covid.

He said while self-isolation regulations remain in place for now, as Covid becomes endemic they would need to be replaced with advice and guidance.

When the current self-isolation regulations expire on 24 March, Mr Johnson said he expected not to renew them. If the data allows, the government will "seek a vote in this House to bring that date forward", the PM added.

Restrictions on visits to care homes in England will also be eased further, with Health Secretary Sajid Javid setting out plans "in the coming days", the prime minister added.

Citing the **latest infection study by the Office for National Statistics**, Mr Johnson said its data showed that infections levels are falling in England. While cases are likely to continue rising in some places, scientists believe "it is likely that the Omicron wave has now peaked nationally", the prime minister said.

The weekly survey of private households estimates that Covid infection levels had fallen in England, Scotland and Wales for the first time since before Christmas.

Its estimates suggest that one in 20 people in England, one in 20 in Scotland and one in 25 in Wales would test positive for Covid in the week ending 15 January - while the trend in Northern Ireland was described as "uncertain".



Analysis  
By Nick Triggle  
Health correspondent



The whole of plan B is going. But is it too soon?

Infections levels, while falling, are still well above what they were last winter. And hospital admissions have only just started coming down.

The fact remains that England - and the rest of the UK for that matter - is one of best protected nations when you combine the immunity built up by vaccination and previous infection.

This does not mean people will not catch the virus in the future, but it does limit how many will become seriously ill.

What's more, this Omicron wave appears to have peaked at just over 2,000 hospital admissions a day - very much best-case scenario territory.

This has given both ministers and the scientists advising them confidence that it's at least time to ease restrictions.

Others will argue this is going too far, too quickly.

But in the end it comes down to a judgement about what is proportionate.

Setting aside the politics, the Tory backbenchers were unlikely to vote to keep plan B. The costs of keeping these restrictions were simply not worth any benefit they bring, ministers believe.

---

The restrictions were first introduced in December in a bid to contain the highly-transmissible Omicron variant and allow time for the booster vaccine rollout.

UK Daily infections remain high but are falling, with the total recorded over the past seven days down 38.9% on the previous week.

The number of Covid-related hospital admissions also appears to be decreasing, with the weekly figure down 2.9% in the seven days up to 14 January.

However, there is a lag between people catching the virus and becoming seriously ill so deaths are continuing to rise - and are up 14.7% on last week.

On Tuesday, the UK recorded 94,432 new cases and 438 deaths within 28 days of a positive test - the highest figure since 24 February - although the daily death figure tends to be higher after weekends because of reporting delays.

More than 36 million boosters have been given across the UK so far, with the government continuing to urge anyone who hasn't received their jabs to come

The UK's devolved nations set their own Covid restrictions and **have moved at different speeds in introducing and easing them throughout the pandemic.**

In **Scotland**, most remaining restrictions will be lifted from Monday, including allowing nightclubs to reopen and removing limits on indoor events.

**In Wales**, crowds will return to sporting events from Friday and nightclubs can reopen the following week. In Northern Ireland, nightclubs remain closed and indoor standing events are not allowed.

Meanwhile, the prime minister continues to face growing pressure over parties held at Downing Street during lockdown.

On Wednesday lunchtime it emerged that Bury South MP Christian Wakeford **had defected to Labour and called on Mr Johnson to quit as prime minister.**

He was among the MPs to have written a letter of no confidence in the prime minister to Sir Graham Brady, chairman of the 1922 committee of backbench Conservatives.

- **Is 'pork pie plot' a serious threat to the PM?**

**Mr Johnson has denied that he was warned a drinks party in May 2020 risked breaking lockdown rules** and has insisted he believed it to be a work event.

But his former aide Dominic Cummings has accused Mr Johnson of misleading MPs, claiming he had waved aside warnings about plans for a party.

If 54 Tory MPs send letters to Sir Graham expressing no confidence in the prime minister, it will trigger a leadership contest.

Pdf by:  
<https://www.pro-memoria.info>

## Around the BBC

BBC

- WHAT IS AN 'ANTI-DIET'? **The food movement that could change your attitude towards exercising**
- FOR THE NHS, THE FIGHT GOES ON: **How is the health service coping two years into the pandemic?**

 **View comments**