



Coronavirus Update 26 – Omicron Variant

This Notice has been issued following the [Government's press conference on the Omicron Variant](#) on 27 November 2021 and subsequent changes to guidance and legislation.

The Government has taken steps to control the spread of the Omicron Variant, including the [mandating of face coverings in certain settings – including in taxis and private hire vehicles](#).

Alongside important information on face coverings, this Notice also contains information on personal hygiene, vehicle hygiene, COVID-19 testing and the steps you must take to self-isolate if you suspect you have the Omicron Variant. There is also information on the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programmes.

This Notice should be read in conjunction with [TPH Notice 15/21 \(Coronavirus Update 25\)](#) and [TPH Notice 10/21 \(Coronavirus Update 23 - consolidation\)](#).

Government guidance is regularly updated and you can keep up-to-date with the latest information [here](#). We will continue to issue TPH Notices to provide updates to licensees if significant changes occur.

Face coverings in taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs)

The Government has mandated the wearing of face coverings in specific settings from 4am on 30 November 2021, including in taxis and PHVs.

Therefore, all passengers travelling in taxis and PHVs are legally required – pursuant to Government regulations – to wear a face covering at all times when in the taxi or PHV, unless they are [exempt](#) from doing so.

PHV operators and taxi booking platforms should communicate Government guidance on face coverings to passengers as part of the booking process, to support drivers and to ensure the safety and comfort of both drivers and passengers.

Transport for London continues to expect taxi and PHV drivers to wear a face covering at all times when in a licensed vehicle, unless they are [exempt](#) from doing so. This is to keep both drivers and passengers safe.

More information on face coverings, including details of exemptions, is provided by the Government [here](#).

Personal hygiene

The Government is clear that COVID-19 remains a serious health risk and that you should stay cautious to help protect yourself and others.

Simple steps can be taken to keep safe:

- Let fresh air in if you meet indoors. Meeting outdoors is safer
- You must wear a face covering in shops, on public transport and when in a taxi or private hire vehicle
- [Get tested](#) and [self-isolate](#) if required
- If you haven't already, [get vaccinated](#) or get a [booster vaccination](#)

Licensees are expected to continue to take the following personal hygiene precautions **as a minimum**:

- Wash or use hand sanitiser on your hands regularly

- Drivers should keep a bottle of hand sanitising gel in their vehicle. It is recommended this be a minimum 60 per cent alcohol
- Wash your hands or use sanitising gel after handling cash
- Do not touch your face
- Drivers should avoid using the recirculated air option for the car's ventilation system when carrying passengers and instead use the car's vents to bring in fresh air from outside or lower the vehicle's windows
- If conditions allow, the car windows should be kept open
- Passengers should be encouraged to use contactless payment or to pay online wherever possible

Vehicle Hygiene

We would like to remind licensees of our short, informative video that provides guidance on how to clean licensed vehicles after each passenger has been safely dropped off and at the end of your shift. The video can be viewed here:

<https://youtu.be/V3ogeV8ucvE>

All licensed taxi and private hire drivers should familiarise themselves with the video and follow the steps to ensure the highest possible safety standards are being met.

COVID-19 vaccination

The NHS says COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective and they give you the best protection against COVID-19.

Alongside the NHS, the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, is calling on any Londoner who has not yet been vaccinated, or who is eligible to receive the booster jab but has not yet taken it up, to do so as soon as possible.

You can [book your vaccination online](#).

COVID-19 booster vaccinations

The NHS says a COVID-19 booster vaccine dose helps improve the protection you have from your first two doses of the vaccine. It helps give you longer-term protection against getting seriously ill from COVID-19.

Further information on COVID-19 booster vaccinations can be found on the [NHS website](#).

COVID-19 testing and self-isolation

All contacts of suspected Omicron cases must self-isolate, regardless of their age or vaccination status. You will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace.

The [Government advises that](#) if you develop [COVID-19 symptoms](#), you should self-isolate immediately and [get a PCR test](#), even if your symptoms are mild. This is because many people experience mild symptoms from COVID-19, but may still pass on the virus to others.

The most important symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell

You should self-isolate at home while you [get a PCR test](#) and wait for the results. You must self-isolate if you test positive. You must self-isolate from the day your symptoms started and the next 10 full days, or from the day your test was taken if you do not have symptoms and the next 10 full days. This is a legal requirement, regardless of whether you have been vaccinated. Self-isolating is important because you could pass the infection on to others, even if you do not have symptoms. You must stay at home for the full amount of time you are told to, because this is the period when the virus is most likely to be passed on to others.

You must also self-isolate if you are told to do so by NHS Test and Trace.

When self-isolating, follow the:

- [Stay-at-home guidance for people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19](#)
- [Stay-at-home guidance for non-household contacts of people with confirmed COVID-19](#)

This will help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 to other members of your household and community.

Further Resources

There is further information regarding COVID-19, including support resources that cover mental health support and wellbeing support on the [TPH health and wellbeing webpage](#) and the [TPH Coronavirus information for licensees webpage](#).

Please do stay safe and well.

Graham Robinson

General Manager

Taxi and Private Hire

Transport for London

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For previous Notices and additional licensing information, please visit tfl.gov.uk/tph