

## English for Life in the UK

### Episode 17 Coronavirus

**Mark:** Hello and welcome to episode 17 of the podcast English for Life in the UK. This podcast is produced by a group of volunteers from the St Augustine's Centre in Halifax, Yorkshire. Today's episode is brought to you by Christine, John and Mark.

This is a special episode of this podcast where we are focussing on the coronavirus and the restrictions that we are all living under at the moment. In this episode we are going to cover:

- the main government advice,
- the support that is available locally, and
- some ideas of how to look after yourself and to cope with the restrictions, the lock down, that is, having to stay inside for most of the time.

This podcast is for intermediate-level learners of English, but if you want more information in your own native language, there is an organisation called "Doctors of the World" which has the latest advice, translated into 48 different languages; the website address for this is [www.doctorsoftheworld](http://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk). So that's www.doctorsoftheworld (*all one word*) .org.uk

There is also further information available on our website. That is, [www.staugustinescentrehalifax.org.uk](http://www.staugustinescentrehalifax.org.uk), where you can also find a transcript of this episode and other episodes in this series. But let's get on with talking about the coronavirus.

**Christine:** So this week we are going to talk about coronavirus or Covid-19, as it's more accurately called, and this is a new virus, a new illness. It has spread to almost every country in the world and lots of people in the UK now have the corona virus. The most common signs or symptoms, are a dry cough and a high temperature - that's also called a fever. Some people with the virus find it harder to breathe, as well. Coronavirus feels different for everyone. Most people feel quite unwell for some days, but most people will not become *very* ill. In fact, some people don't feel very ill at all - but some people do become very ill and need to go to hospital and some people have even died from it. So, the government has introduced some rules to help stop the spread of this virus and they are very simply - we must all stay at home. Staying at home means

staying in your house, or - if you have a garden, you can stay in your garden. And there are four reasons that allow you to go out of your home - and only for four things can you go out:

- One, is for essential shopping, for example, to buy food or medicine;
- Second thing is for exercise - once a day, you can go out to go for a walk or a run or take some exercise; this is important to keep healthy- it's important to exercise;
- A third reason to go out is if you are working - if you have a job and you cannot work from home, then you may travel to and from your work;
- And the fourth reason is for medical reasons - for example, you may go out to collect medicine for a vulnerable person or somebody in your family, for example.

But if you do go outside, it's very important that you stay at least two metres away from anybody else. There is some more advice on how to keep safe and one of the most important things, there, is to wash your hands. Wash your hands often, with soap and warm water, for at least 20 seconds. That's quite a time, 20 seconds! You can try it out and you must wash your hands, especially if you touch something that may have been touched by somebody else. It's also important that you don't touch your nose, your eyes or your mouth until you have washed your hands properly.

(6:50 minutes)

If you find that you develop the symptoms of coronavirus - if you do, you must stay at home and not go out for any reason at all and those symptoms, of course, are that dry cough - so a new dry cough - or a high temperature - a fever. If you develop those, then you must stay at home and not go out at all, for any reason.

**John:** The government advice is to self-isolate for 7 days, isn't it?

**Christine:** Yes - but if you live with other people, those other people who live in the same house, they must also stay indoors - and they must stay indoors for 14 days, so that's more than you. If, at the end of the 7 days, you no longer have a fever, so if your temperature is normal, then you may go out again, but the people in your house must stay in for a further 7 days, in case they develop the illness later.

**John:** I think its worth mentioning, perhaps, as well, Christine, that there are specific groups in our community who would be the most at risk of coronavirus - so it's particularly risky for old people, pregnant women and anybody who has an underlying health problem like asthma, for example, or anybody who is immuno-surpressed, which means, perhaps, somebody who is undergoing chemotherapy: their immune system isn't as strong as it might be, so those people are recommended to take extra care during this period.

**Christine:** Also people with diabetes, I know.

**John:** Indeed

**Christine:** And in fact some people in this country have been instructed or strongly advised to stay indoors completely for 12 weeks - actually, I'm saying stay indoors, I mean, stay on their own property, if they are lucky enough to have a garden, they can go into the garden, but that means that they need to find somebody else - to get a friend or a family member to do all their shopping for them.

And if you do have the symptoms of coronavirus and you are staying at home - staying indoors - and if during those 7 days, instead of getting better, you start to feel worse, and then, you don't go to your doctor, you ring NHS 111. You can speak to them on the telephone or go on-line, it's called NHS111. On the telephone you just dial 111 - and you will speak to somebody, eventually, usually you need to wait a long time, but eventually somebody will speak to you and can give you advice. And if necessary, they may get somebody - a paramedic, perhaps, to come to your house to treat you and possibly, for you to go to hospital.

**Mark:** I suppose what we want to do is help people with how they manage, in what are very unusual times. And there are certainly some things that are happening locally, that is, in and around the St Augustine's centre, in Halifax, to help people out. I think John you've got a list of what some of those things are.

(10:54)

**John:** Yeah, Thank you Christine, thank you Mark. Myself and some of the other volunteers and the full-time staff are still going to be at St Augustine's during the lock down. As you know, St Augustine's provides food to people normally 4 or 5 days a week. During the lock down, hot food,

to take away, will be provided on Mondays and Thursdays, at 12.30; so that's every Monday and Thursday, at 12.30, throughout the lockdown period. There is also Becky and Nia and Sara will be giving advice - so the advice surgeries that we used to offer before the lock down will be continuing over the telephone and they will be - the lines are open on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, from 10. 00 am until 3.00 pm and there are two telephone numbers - so the first number is 07743045625. The other number 07756262024.

Myself, Mark and Christine, as you know, are involved in the provision of ESOL classes and the Life in the UK classes. We had a meeting this morning, over Zoom, the ESOL tutors, and we are continuing to stay in touch with our students and to provide ESOL classes over the internet.

So people who've signed up to that will be getting emails this week, we'll be doing Zoom classes and various things over the internet to keep people's ESOL classes going. On social media, people can follow our Twitter accounts, for updates about what is happening, and Becky's informed me, there's also a Facebook group that is staugustinescentre, Halifax, on Facebook. Within that group, there's an extra group called the support group, so if you log into that, as a member, you can find out about the support that's going on throughout the lock down. Also, I've looked at the Calderdale Council website. If you go on to the Calderdale Council website and type in corona virus, there's various headings that come up and tells you all about the services that are ongoing, or the services that have been disrupted. You can request support from the Council if you need specific support - there's a portal for community support and volunteering, and so if you feel well and feel up to it, you can volunteer to help the Council, helping other people and there's corona virus advice and updates on there. There's also a specific thing, advice and support on that website and that links to all the different areas of Calderdale, so anybody who stays in Elland, or Hebden Bridge or anywhere in Halifax, and it will tell you the specific things in your area, such as food banks, GP surgeries and things like that.

(14:18)

**Mark:** Thank you very much, John. A couple of things occur to me about that. When people come to pick up the meals - those days when there are the hot meals - I think I'm right in saying that it's very carefully managed so that people stay that distance apart that Christine was talking about earlier.

John: It is. We've drawn lines on the floor, so that when people are queuing up for their food, that they're all keeping two metres apart. Christine pointed out that we're taking extra care - it's always very hygienic in the kitchen, as you know, we're taking extra care and we're washing our hands constantly, obviously, we're wearing protective clothing, gloves and everything, when we're serving people. And the food is being prepared in plastic cartons so that people can take it away and eat it - y'know, we're not all crowding together and eating.

**Mark:** Thank you, John. The other thing that I thought was, perhaps, just worth saying a little more about was that you mentioned about the English classes that we're going to offer, via particularly, an app called Zoom. We do know that not everybody will have access to that, because not everybody will have wifi or the data to be able to use those, so we are also going to offer people support by telephone and by WhatsApp, for those who have WhatsApp groups.

All of those, we will reaching out to people in the next week or two. OK I think the other thing to say is for listeners who are not in our local area. I think you will find that your local council, wherever you are, will have some advice and will let you know what organisations are supporting people, particularly with things like food and general advice.

Thank you very much, John and Christine, for that. We thought we would finish this episode by just discussing a bit about how people can look after themselves, in these difficult times, because it is worrying. It's worrying for all of us and particularly we know that some of our listeners are already feeling quite isolated and are now being told that they shouldn't go out, so a few ideas that we think would be helpful to people.

I think the first thing to emphasise is, Christine did say: you can go out for exercise once a day and I think we would very strongly advise that people did do that. Exercise is important - it's important for your physical health and your mental health, so do take that opportunity to go out for a walk, keep your distance from other people, when you do it. One idea that someone said to me that I liked, this time of the year, this is the Spring - and if you do go out and you can go to a park, or anywhere there is some greenery, some trees - then just use it as an opportunity to connect with what's happening with nature: with the way in which flowers and trees are coming out, the sounds of birds, because there is less traffic on the roads, it's easier to hear the birds, now, so don't just exercise for the sake of it, but use it as an opportunity as well to connect with nature.

And for those of you with a faith, you may find that that it is also an opportunity to exercise your faith, as part of connecting with nature, or the spiritual side of life. And those of you with a religion will know that it is not only in churches and mosques and temples that you can worship and practise your religion.

A second thing I'd say is do try and keep in touch with people, in other ways. So if you have got friends and family that you can speak to regularly on the 'phone, that's really important to do, to keep in touch. If you don't have anybody that you can make contact with that's one of the things where you could ask for help, for example, from the St Augustine's Centre, and we may well be able to put you in touch with somebody you could regularly talk to, maybe somebody whose native language is the same as yours, for example.

(19:30)

And I think when you are talking with people, don't be afraid to express your feelings - to say how you are feeling. It's important for us all to be able to recognise that actually feeling anxious is quite normal at the moment and if you talk about that with people, then actually it can help.

So physical exercise, of course, is not just outside, so the other thing would be, wherever you are, even if you are in a small flat, a small apartment or a room in a house, there are exercises you can do to keep yourself healthy and if you can't make your own up, then again, if you do have access to the internet, there are lots of examples of things on YouTube, and on other sites where people can help you with 10 or 15 minutes of exercise a day.

And another form of exercise, in a different way, is the kind of relaxation techniques that you can do - something that's sometimes called mindfulness. Christine, I think ... is that something that you've been involved in yourself? Is there anything that you could advise and help people, around that?

**Christine:** Well, I think - I've certainly taken a short course in mindfulness and I've found it really helpful. A simple exercise like sitting comfortably or lying down and focussing on your breathing, first of all - just feel yourself breathing in and out and just focus on that and let any thoughts that may come to your mind just disappear or to pass on. It can be - it can also work very well to do something called the body scan - which is - after you focus on your breathing for a few minutes - then take your attention to different parts of your body - perhaps start at your toes and work up

through your feet and through your legs and through your body until you get to the top of your head, just breathing slowly and peacefully and bringing your attention to something inside you. That can be very calming.

**Mark:** That's great, thank you. A connected thing, I think it is important that people are looking after their health, during this period - that means wherever you can, eating good healthy food, the other thing is to say that you can - Christine did say this - you can go out for medical reasons, so that it is possible to go for example to a chemist or a pharmacy to get advice and to get medication. It's also possible to connect with doctors. These days, very often they ask you to do that initially by 'phone but your health in general, apart from the virus side of things, is important for you to continue to look after, during this time.

And then one last thing and I hope an obvious thing for those of you who are listening to this podcast, it is a good opportunity to practice your English. So find things to listen to, this podcast is one example, but there are lots of others: podcasts, radio, television, if you have access to it, to listen and just practice understanding what's happening - you don't need to understand every word, the more you listen the more you focus on trying to improve your English then, that will be good for you generally, and you can feel you're making some progress in something that you have some control over.

Now John, Christine, have you any other thoughts about what advice we can give to people?

**John:** One of the things with regards to our courses that you mentioned at the ESOL Life in the UK - the BBC are making a lot of resources available because obviously, the schools are closed - the colleges and universities are closed. So, the BBC Sounds website, Radio 4, lots of great history programmes, English language and resources covering a whole array of different subjects and topics - so that's something you can really get involved in.

One of the other things i would recommend is the "Future Learn" website - now these are courses in English and in history and in science and in all sorts of subjects that are put together by various UK universities and they are completely free to access, if you do have access to the internet, so that's something you can keep your mind occupied during long periods of lock down.

**Mark:** Can you repeat that website name ?

**John:** Its' 'Futurelearn' ( [www.futurelearn.com](http://www.futurelearn.com) ) that's on the web - they've got an array of different courses. And the 'BBC Sounds' is the website covering BBC radio and that's something, if you do have access to the internet, there's a huge array of English language and courses that would be relevant to our 'Life in the UK' programme that we've been teaching.

**Mark:** Thank you John. I was going to mention another website that I came across which was called "Through the Maze" and if you Google that, you will get a link to that website ([www.through-the-maze.org.uk](http://www.through-the-maze.org.uk) ) and there it has a range of activities that people can be doing. It's geared up specifically, for this situation of people are having to stay in during this lock down period. So I hope that will be useful to you.

Christine, have you anything else to add?

**Christine:** No, I think you've covered a lot of things but I just want to emphasise the first thing you said, Mark, about the importance of going outside. I have been speaking to many people who thought they must literally stay at home - stay indoors, all the time - and I do encourage people to go outside - as you said, to take a walk, and take a look at nature. I was thinking, when you were speaking, Mark - if it wasn't for the corona virus and if we were teaching in the classroom, today's topic would be '*British flora and fauna*' - so the nature in this country - and it's an ideal opportunity to go and look and see what you can see and if you're from a different country, perhaps, notice the differences.

**Mark:** OK - Thank you very much everybody - I hope you found that useful.

That's it for this week - this very special episode of the Podcast. We hope that you've found it useful and we will be back with another episode next week. Until then, take care of yourselves and stay safe.