

Joint statement on COVID-19 restrictions in the UK

22nd December 2021

This is a joint statement issued on behalf of:

College of Practitioners of Phytotherapy

National Institute of Medical Herbalists

Register of Chinese Herbal Medicine

Unified Register of Herbal Practitioners

European Herbal and Traditional Medicine Practitioners Association

Our professional associations continue to monitor the announcements from HM's Government regarding the recent increase of COVID-19 cases in the UK due to the Omicron variant.

England announced a move to the Plan B guidance on 8th December. The rules for close-contact services, which include herbal medicine, have not changed to any great degree: [gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/shops-branches-and-close-contact-services](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/shops-branches-and-close-contact-services).

For the relevant advice relating to other countries in the UK, please see:

- Scotland: [gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-general-guidance-for-safer-workplaces/](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-general-guidance-for-safer-workplaces/).
- Wales: [gov.wales/alert-level-0-guidance-employers-businesses-and-organisations](https://www.gov.wales/alert-level-0-guidance-employers-businesses-and-organisations).
- Northern Ireland: [nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/coronavirus-guide-making-workplaces-safer-and-priority-sector-list](https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/coronavirus-guide-making-workplaces-safer-and-priority-sector-list).

There also seem to have been no significant changes or updates regarding the use of face coverings, PPE, hand and equipment sanitising, and the cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces in England. The only change has been the guidance regarding testing and isolation for people who test positive for COVID, those who live with someone who has symptoms of COVID or has tested positive for COVID, or those who have been in close contact with someone with confirmed COVID infection. For in-depth guidance relating to England, please see: [nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/).

For isolation and testing advice in other parts of the UK, please see:

- Scotland: [nhsinform.scot/isolation](https://www.nhsinform.scot/isolation).
- Wales: [gov.wales/self-isolation](https://www.gov.wales/self-isolation).
- Northern Ireland: [nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating-and-close-contacts](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating-and-close-contacts).

All the PAs are in agreement that the safety of both the patient and practitioner remains the key concern. For each individual practitioner, care setting and patient, a personalised risk assessment should continue to inform the necessary steps and procedures to ensure that the

treatment environment is COVID-secure. The professional associations' stance therefore continues to remain unchanged at the moment. We encourage our members to:

- Work from home wherever feasible.
- Carry out an individual risk assessment before physically seeing a patient.
- Carry out face-to-face consultations only when necessary.
- Minimise non-distanced time spent with patients.
- Wear suitable PPE, particularly when within close distance (less than 1 m) of a patient.

While Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have confirmed their measures for Christmas and the New Year (please see links above), we are not sure what further action (if any) will be taken in England before or after Christmas. We will of course send an update to practitioners if needed.

Please keep safe and well, and we would like to wish you all a Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year.

Robyn Soma
President of the National Institute of Medical Herbalists

Chris Etheridge
President of the College of Practitioners of Phytotherapy
President of the European Herbal and Traditional Medicine Practitioners Association

Alex Jacobs
President of the Register of Chinese Herbal Medicine

Laura Yarham
President of the Unified Register of Herbal Practitioners