

How Technology Could Help You During the Coronavirus Outbreak

Current medical advice – 17th March 2020:

- **Wash your hands frequently** – If you've been out in public, wash your hands with soap and hot water for 20 seconds when you get home. You should also wash your hands before eating or handling food, and after you blow your nose, sneeze or cough.
- **Use a disposable tissue to catch coughs and sneezes** – If you haven't got a tissue, use the inside of your arm, rather than your hands. Throw used tissues in the bin straight away and then wash your hands.
- **Try not to touch your face unless you've just washed your hands** – Easier said than done, I know.
- **Avoid close contact with sick people**

If you or someone else in your household feels unwell

If you have a fever, or a new persistent cough, **don't** go to your GP or pharmacy. Instead:

1. Keep yourself separate from other people as much as you can ("self-isolate") for 14 days. It's okay to go out for a walk, but you'll need to have shopping delivered and left outside your house.
2. Other people in your household must also self-isolate for 14 days.
3. If your symptoms get worse or you don't feel better after 14 days, contact NHS 111. If you can, use the website, 111.nhs.uk rather than calling.

The Prime Minister is holding daily press conferences with updates to this advice. Please check the www.bbc.co.uk/news for more information.

Do you need to self-isolate?

At the moment, advice from the government and health professionals is that those over the age of 70 or with pre-existing health conditions should start to reduce contact with other people – to protect themselves from infection.

Also, people in those categories should be preparing themselves to fully self-isolate very shortly – possibly for up to 12 weeks.

Everyone – whether they're in a high-risk category or not – has been asked to avoid going out to pubs, clubs, theatres and restaurants.

But isolating yourself physically doesn't have to mean shutting yourself off entirely. There are plenty of practicalities that the internet can help you with:

Online grocery shopping

There are lots of different websites that you can order grocery shopping from – all the big supermarkets do it now – but they all work in a very similar way.

Here's how it works:

1. Start by going to the supermarket's website. The web address is usually pretty obvious, but here's a list of the main ones:

Tesco – www.tesco.com

Asda – www.asda.com

Sainsbury's – www.sainsburys.co.uk

Waitrose – www.waitrose.com

Morrisons – www.morrisons.com

Iceland – www.iceland.co.uk

2. You might have to click or tap on “groceries” to get to the right bit of the website.
3. Then you'll be asked to sign up for an account before you start. Signing up is free and easy – all you need to do is give them a few details like your name and an email address.

4. Either before or after you do your shopping, you can pick a time for it to be delivered to your house. At the moment, delivery slots are in very short supply – so you might have book well in advance!
5. Once you've done that, you can browse for goods by category or “aisle”, start from a typed shopping list, or search for individual items one-by-one.
6. When you find something you want, you can either just add it to your basket, or choose a quantity or weight first.
7. Then once you're happy, you check out and pay for your shopping using a credit or debit card.



That way, you can choose your shopping online (any time of the day or night) and have it delivered at a time that suits you. You don't have to go out to the shop yourself. You'll need to let the supermarket know if you're self-isolating (either because you're ill or you want to protect yourself). They'll handle your shopping slightly differently.

Don't worry that they'll bring you a soggy lettuce or a squashed loaf of bread that's fallen off the top shelf. The people picking your shopping for you always try to find the best fruit and veg, and they won't send out anything with a dent in (unless it's that or nothing!)

One disadvantage of doing your grocery shopping online is that you can't see what's out of stock when you put your order in – not usually, anyway. If they haven't got what you've asked for, they'll try and make a substitution (i.e. give you something similar that they *do* have) but sometimes there just isn't anything!

Other online shopping

Pretty much anything you want to buy now, you can go online to order – and have it posted or delivered to your door.

If you're not sure where to look for something, you could always try starting with Amazon at *amazon.co.uk*. They stock most things you might need.

Ordering prescriptions online

There are several services now that let you order repeat prescriptions online and have your medicine delivered to your door. You don't have to go to your GP or the pharmacy to do it.

Two that I know of are the Boots prescription delivery service and “Well” pharmacy, which is the online branch of Bestway Chemists.

Here's how it works:

1. Start by going to the pharmacy's website. The Boots online pharmacy is at *boots.com/online/pharmacy* or to try Well, go to *well.co.uk*.
2. You need to create an account with whichever pharmacy you want to use. They'll need both your details and the name and address of your GP.
3. Once you're all set up with your account, you can order whichever medication you need through the website. They'll check with your GP, and then send you your medication in the post.

Ordering takeaway online

If you're trying to go out less, you might prefer to order in takeaway rather than going out for a meal sometimes.

You can do that over the phone, but you need to know where you're ordering from and have a phone number for them. And you used to be pretty limited in the things you could order that way.

But if you live in a decent-sized town, it's worth looking at the Just Eat website (*just-eat.co.uk*) or Uber Eats (*ubereats.com*).

Here's how it works:

1. Go to whichever of the websites you want to try (or look at both to see if they give you different options).
 2. Type in your postcode to get a list of all the places that you can get food delivered from. I typed in my postcode and got 27 options, everything from a vegan Moroccan cafe to the Toby Carvery.
 3. Choose a restaurant and put in your order (there might be a minimum order value).
 4. Then you can pay online and wait for your food to be delivered.
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Keeping in Touch with Friends and Family

If you do either need to self-isolate (because you've fallen ill), or you've chosen to spend less time out and about, it's important that you keep in touch with people.

Isolation can be a very dangerous thing.

So here are my top tips for keeping your nearest and dearest close even when you can't be round them physically.

Using video calling

Before you can make a video call, you need to have an account with a video calling service. It doesn't cost anything to set up, but you have to go through putting in some details – they need to know who you are so they can send calls through to the right person!

Then if you want to call someone, they need to be using the same system as you – if you're using Skype, they need to have a Skype account. If you're using Facebook Messenger's video calling, the other person needs a Facebook account and so on.

In fact you might want more than one system set up (say an account for Skype and one for Facebook) if one person you want to call uses one and another person uses another.

To use, it's pretty similar to a normal phone:

1. Choose someone to call (how you do that depends on which system you're using), tap or click to call them and their device rings.
2. They can see who's calling and then tap or click to answer.
3. Once you're connected, they can see you and you can see them. You can also see a little picture of yourself in the corner of the screen, so you know what they're seeing!

With most video calling systems, you can also make group calls – where three or more of you all talk at once. This can be great if you want to get the whole family together.

Skype is one of the best known and was the first popular one. One of the advantages of Skype is that lots of people have an account because it's been around a while. It also comes ready-installed on Windows 10 PCs.

Facebook Messenger video calling. If you have a Facebook account, you can use the video calling in Facebook Messenger. The other person needs to have a Facebook account, but lots of people do have, which is one advantage of using this system.

I've also found that Facebook video calling often works better than Skype when the internet connection's poor.

Using Facebook

It's no substitute for actually talking to someone, but keeping up with your friends' goings on on Facebook can be an easy way to stay connected.

You do have to be a little bit careful with it, though. At times like this – when there's big news happening – you'll see an awful lot of it being shared on Facebook. Some of it will be true, but some of it's just nonsense.

Here are some coronavirus-related tales that have been doing the rounds, which I know (having checked actual public health information) are **not true**:

- **Recipes for home-made hand sanitiser.** If you've got access to

soap and water, that's the best way to clean your hands. Wash them thoroughly with soap for at least 20 seconds. If you don't have access to water, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser instead. But the recipes for home-made sanitiser on Facebook – using vodka or gin – just *don't* have enough alcohol in them to kill the virus. They *will not work!*

- **Hot drinks and avoiding ice-cubes.** I read in one of those chain letter things that get shared around – just this morning – that the virus can't survive temperatures above 27 °C. It suggested drinking lots of tea to kill off the virus in our mouths and throats. Now, I'm no biologist, but given that body temperature is 37 °C, if that story were true we wouldn't have anything to worry about would we! (I've checked by the way, and it *is* nonsense.)
- **Eating garlic.** This is another one that's been doing the rounds – that eating garlic can stop you catching the virus, or kill it if it's already in your system. Now, garlic is a very healthy vegetable, but this virus (to my knowledge) is *not* a vampire. The usual dietary advice stands – eat a balanced diet including a good mix of fresh fruit and vegetables to give your body the best chance of fighting off infection.

If you *are* worried about fake news, you can get the latest official advice from the NHS website at www.nhs.uk.



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