



THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH
BELL RINGERS

Is it appropriate for an individual to ring?

Guidance for individual ringers

Returning to ringing is not risk-free, even after receiving two doses of vaccine. So it is important for each individual to carefully consider, and personally decide, whether it is appropriate for them to do so – with respect to their own health, that of their fellow ringers, and of the community as a whole.

One of the stronger objective facts that emerged in the first year of the Coronavirus pandemic is the difference of risk (of severe illness and death) between individuals. The risk of hospitalisation and death increases very significantly with age, particularly over the age of 50. In addition, men tend to have more severe illness than women, as do people with BAME heritage, whilst pre-existing conditions strongly affect the outcome of infection.

By April 2021, vaccination in the UK has been very successful (up to 90%) in reducing the risk of hospitalisation and death due to Coronavirus infection, **by variants currently circulating in the community**. However, if new variants establish a foothold, then risk levels are likely to rise again.

AGE The risk of death, and the likelihood of a severe infection, as a result of contracting Coronavirus, increases very significantly with age.

Older band members should consider seriously whether it is appropriate for them to ring, particularly if for any reason they have not been vaccinated.

RISKS FROM MEDICAL CONDITIONS

The NHS classifies two levels of increased risk. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>

1. People at HIGH risk (clinically extremely vulnerable)

These people would have been contacted by the NHS in March / April 2020 and told to shield.

Although the advice to shield has been relaxed, these people should not ring and put themselves at risk unless, for example, they have received both doses of vaccine.

2. People at MODERATE risk from coronavirus include people who:

- are 70 or older
- have a lung condition that's not severe (such as asthma, COPD, emphysema or bronchitis)
- have heart disease (such as heart failure)
- have diabetes
- have chronic kidney disease
- have liver disease (such as hepatitis)
- have a condition affecting the brain or nerves (such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy)
- have a condition that means they have a high risk of getting infections
- are taking medicine that can affect the immune system (such as low doses of steroids)
- are very obese (a BMI of 40 or above)
- are pregnant

Note how this list starts by including anyone with no illness other than that of being aged over 70!

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For anyone with one of these conditions, the likelihood of a bad outcome from catching an infection is considerably greater, and so please bear this in mind in your decision making particularly if for any reason (such as being pregnant) they have not been vaccinated .

BEING A RISK TO OTHERS

Some people, although possibly at low personal risk if they were to contract the infection, may be at greater risk of catching it, and then passing it on to the rest of the band – either in the infectious day or two before starting symptoms, or because they happen to be an asymptomatic carrier.

Examples of such people are:

People who have not yet been vaccinated

University and School Students

Staff in hospital and care environments

Teachers and University staff

Essential workers with client contact e.g. supermarket staff Security Guards

Factory and processing plant workers

In caring for one another, you may feel that it is better for you not to bring an increased risk into the tower. You should certainly inform fellow ringers that you are in a higher risk occupation, or unvaccinated, and check that they feel at ease ringing with you.

Now that Lateral Flow Testing is universally available, it may help the band to feel that it is reasonable for such people to ring, so long as they have tested negative in the previous 0-48 hours.

BEING ANXIOUS ABOUT IT

If, despite the very much improved situation we find ourselves in, the thought of returning to ringing makes you anxious, then you should not do it. You do not have to explain yourself. No one will criticise you. No one will pressurise you.

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