Coronavirus: Woman is first UK patient to die after testing positive for COVID-19

The woman in her 70s was admitted to the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading on Wednesday and had tested positive for COVID-19.
A woman in her 70s has become the first person in the UK to die after being diagnosed with coronavirus - as it was revealed she caught the virus in Britain.

The patient was admitted to the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading on Wednesday evening and had tested positive for COVID-19, the disease caused by coronavirus.

A statement released by the hospital on Thursday said: "Sadly, we can confirm that an older patient with underlying health conditions has died.

"The patient has previously been in and out of hospital for non-coronavirus reasons, but on this occasion was admitted and last night tested positive for coronavirus.

"The family has been informed and our thoughts are with them at this difficult time."

England's Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty, said the "older patient" who died is believed to have contracted the virus in the UK "and contact tracing is already under way."

It comes after the number of coronavirus cases in the UK more than doubled in 48 hours, with Downing Street warning it is "highly likely" the virus will now spread in a "significant way".
On the prospect of fatalities rising, clinical lecturer at King's College London Dr Nathalie MacDermott told Sky News "we have to be realistic that if the virus continues to spread in the UK there may be more".

Some **116 people have now tested positive for COVID-19** in the UK, including 105 in England, three in Wales, six in Scotland and three in Northern Ireland.

Just two days ago there were 51 UK cases.

Officials confirmed 18 people diagnosed with coronavirus have since recovered, while 45 of the confirmed cases are being treated at home.

The NHS has urged anyone returning to the UK from any part of **Italy** - which is facing Europe's biggest outbreak - to self-isolate if they develop symptoms.

However anyone returning to the UK from "lockdown" areas in the north of Italy in the past two weeks has been told to self-isolate even if they do not have symptoms.

Last week, the Foreign Office confirmed a British man in his 70s who had been on board the **Diamond Princess** cruise ship, which was quarantined in Japan, had died from the virus.

Of the new UK coronavirus cases announced on Thursday, 17 people had recently travelled from countries or clusters already under investigation, while eight people contracted the virus in the UK and are being investigated.

Out of the overall cases identified in England, 25 of them are in London.

The North West and South East each have 17 cases, the South West 15, the East of England eight, the Midlands nine and the North East and Yorkshire 10 cases.

Four other cases are still to be determined.

England’s chief medical officer told MPs earlier that the **UK is now in the second phase** of its response to the outbreak.

Professor Whitty said Britain was "mainly" in the "delay" phase of the government’s four-stage approach to COVID-19.
But he said he was expecting the number of UK cases to go up over the coming weeks due to evidence of "some level of community transmission".

He also warned that critical care beds in the NHS could come under intense pressure during a coronavirus epidemic.

Prof Whitty said people with "very minimal" symptoms should stay at home because it would be "safer and more pleasant" for them.

He added that it would be "lucky" to get a vaccine for COVID-19 in the next year, but it would "not get us out of a hole now", although other treatments may work.

In other developments:

- Airline Flybe fell into administration after struggling to raise funds amid a steep fall in bookings due to coronavirus
- England rugby team's Six Nations game against Italy in Rome was postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak
- The Premier League said it will scrap handshakes before matches in an effort to prevent the spread of the disease
- The competition watchdog warned retailers they could be prosecuted for trying to "exploit" the coronavirus outbreak by selling protective products at inflated prices
- Bank HSBC said an employee at its Canary Wharf offices in London had been diagnosed and it is "deep-cleaning" areas he worked
- Starbucks said it was "pausing the use of personal cups" in its UK stores due to coronavirus fears
Virus Outbreak: Global Emergency - Watch a special Sky News programme on coronavirus at 6pm weekdays