



Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Close Contact Information Leaflet V17.0, 19 Jan 2021

Please read this letter and the enclosed information leaflets carefully.

PLEASE NOTE: Because the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus in the human population, new information is becoming available as doctors and scientists study the virus and how it affects people. While the information contained in this pack was accurate at the time it was printed, we advise you to check the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) website, www.hpsc.ie for the most up-to-date information. The HPSC website is updated frequently as new information about the COVID-19 becomes available.

You have been identified as a close contact of a case of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) based on the 'Contact Tracing Risk Assessment of Healthcare Workers with Potential Workplace Exposure to Covid-19 Case'. As a result, you are now required to restrict movements and will require active close contact monitoring for up to 14 days after your last unprotected exposure to a case of COVID-19 under the supervision of the Occupational Health Service (OHS). You will also undergo testing for Covid-19.

The aim of active close contact testing and monitoring, is to identify close contacts with pre-symptomatic COVID-19 or those who develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 at the earliest opportunity, to help prevent the further spread of the virus to family, friends and colleagues.

What does the testing and monitoring involve?

Once you have been identified as a close contact tests will be arranged for day 5 and day 10 after your last close contact with the positive case.

- If Covid-19 is identified you will be required to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of that test or, if you become symptomatic, from the date symptoms began.
- If the day 10 test is confirmed as negative, you can exit restricted movement and return to work immediately.
- Unless you have a confirmed negative 'Day 10' test, you must continue to restrict movement for 14 days.

During the period of monitoring, you will be contacted daily by Occupational Health or their linked services. This may be by phone but is usually by text, reminding you to contact Occupational Health if you develop any symptoms of COVID-19.

Please note: If you had COVID-19 infection detected less than 3 months previously, you can continue working and no test is required.

No matter which situation applies you must self-monitor for symptoms and self isolate if symptoms occur – see 'What are the symptoms?'

During the time that you are being monitored - i.e. for 14 days (or10 days with negative day 10 test) after your last unprotected exposure to a case of COVID-19) you must ‘Restrict Movement’

This means:

- You must NOT go to work
- You should limit your social interactions in so far as possible. This means staying at home or your hotel room.
- You must adhere to national guidance on social distancing and restricted movement
- Where possible, arrange your groceries online or have some family or friends drop it off to the house.
- You CAN go outside on your own to exercise, so long as you can maintain social distance of 2 meters.
- You should not use public transport.
- You should avoid contact with at-risk or highly vulnerable people
<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/at-risk-groups.html>.
- You should be contactable by phone at all times
- Avoid the use of anti-pyretics, (for example paracetamol, ibuprofen) while undertaking monitoring in case they mask symptoms
- You should always engage in regular hand washing and cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or the bend of your elbow when coughing and sneezing to prevent the spread of infection.

These restrictions can be a source of stress for some people. Many things may help you cope better with the period of monitoring:

- **Set goals:** Setting goals and achieving them can give you a sense of control. The goals must be realistic in the given circumstances and could include writing a diary or learning new skills.
- **Keep active:** Read, write, play games, do crossword puzzles, sudokus, develop mind games to stimulate thinking, for example, remember the plots of movies or passages from books. The possibilities are unlimited.
- **Look for or inject humour into the situation:** Even smiling and laughing inwardly can provide relief from anxiety and frustration.
- **Eat sufficiently and exercise as much as possible:** This will help keep the body strong and counteracts the physical effects of stress.
- **Actively use stress management techniques:** Physical relaxation techniques can reduce stress levels and are useful methods to manage pain and emotional turmoil. Most people are familiar with stress management techniques but not all use them in practice; however, this is the time to the use of such techniques.
- **Accept feelings:** Being in a stressful situation can cause a lot of different emotional reactions like anger, frustration, anxiety, regrets, second-guessing yourself, self-blame etc. These feelings are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. (See EAP details for further support).

What are the symptoms?

For the period of restricted movement after your last unprotected exposure to a case of COVID-19, please monitor yourself for any respiratory symptoms. This includes the usual Covid-19 symptoms such as **Fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, loss or change in sense of smell or taste, and also milder respiratory symptoms such as sore throat or runny nose**

If you develop any potential symptoms:

- a. You need to self-isolate straight away: If you have a surgical mask, put it on and **isolate yourself** from others (for example stay in a different room from the rest of your family with the door closed).
- b. Once you are isolated from others you may remove the surgical mask. If you need to come in contact with other people for any reason **please put on a surgical mask before contact**.
- c. **Do not attend** your GP, including their out-of-hours/on-call service or your local Emergency Department unless told to do so by Occupational Health or your GP.
- d. You should phone the **Occupational Health Service (see below link for contact numbers)** and identify yourself as a **symptomatic close contact** of COVID-19. If acutely unwell you should phone your local GP service or, if necessary, the ambulance service. **(Please check local GP out of hours contact details and add below)**.

Please Note: As you are a Healthcare Worker you MAY be given derogation by your manager to return to work if you are essential to that service, which means you may be allowed to work with additional monitoring. However, your manager will contact you if this is the case. If you do return to work you must continue to restrict movements and adhere to these instructions outside of work. You will be asked to do additional monitoring while in work, which will be coordinated by your manager. You can only return to work if you have no symptoms. See 'Further Information' on this page for the link.

Contact Details

Occupational Health Service: **01 8093273**

See <http://workwell.ie/contact-list/contact-your-local-occupational-health-service/>

GP Out of Hours: **DDoc North Dublin 1850 22 44 77**

Employee Assistance and Counselling Service: Local Contact Details: **1800 409388**

See <https://healthservice.hse.ie/filelibrary/staff/employee-assistance-programme-contact-details-for-counsellors.pdf>

Further Information

Further information including frequently asked questions is available at the following link:

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/frequentlyaskedquestions/>

Or you can contact the COVID-19 HCW helpdesk – **1850 420 420**
9 am-6 pm Mon-Fri.

Specific Information regarding restricting movements and self-isolation at home is available on the HPSC website <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/selfisolationathome/>

Guidance on the 'Derogation for the return to work of Healthcare Workers (HCW) who have been advised to restrict their movements BUT are identified as essential for critical service' is available at <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/occupationalhealthguidance/>