The Health Protection Surveillance Centre has today been notified of three cases of a new variant of COVID-19 (‘P1’), first identified in Brazil.

All of the cases identified are directly associated with recent travel from Brazil. All cases are being followed up by public health teams and enhanced public health measures have been put in place, in line with guidance.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health, Dr Ronan Glynn said: “Anyone who has recently travelled from Brazil, or any of the other 19 countries recently designated by the Minister for Health as ‘Category 2’, is required by law to quarantine at home for 14 days. In addition any such passengers should phone any GP or GP out of hours service to arrange a free COVID-19 test – the test should be done 5 days after you arrived in Ireland or as soon as possible after those 5 days. Whatever the result of the test, you must complete the 14 day period of quarantine. Full details of advice and procedures on how to quarantine safely are available at www.hse.ie.

"This P1 variant has previously been identified in a small number of European countries, including France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain. While there is currently no microbiological or epidemiological evidence of any change in transmissibility of P1, this is plausible. Further studies are required to determine whether this variant is likely to have an impact on vaccine effectiveness or infection severity.

"Detection of this variant in Ireland does not change the fact that our best defence against all forms of COVID-19 is to stick with the public health measures that have proved to be effective in reducing incidence of disease in our communities. We must continue to wash our hands well and often, wear a mask, cough and sneeze into our elbows, keep two metres social distance from others and avoid crowds, and always remember that it is imperative to phone your GP at the very first sign of COVID-19 symptoms."

All passengers from overseas, regardless of originating country, are required by law to quarantine at home for 14 days.

ENDS
Notes

The currently designated countries are:

- Angola
- Austria
- Botswana
- Brazil
- Burundi
- Cape Verde
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Lesotho
- Malawi
- Eswatini
- Mauritius
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- Republic of South Africa
- Rwanda
- Seychelles
- Tanzania
- United Arab Emirates
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

Passengers arriving from these countries must currently self-isolate in their home for a period of 14 days.