Coronavirus **COVID-19**

Coronavirus
COVID-19
Public Health
Advice

Public Information Booklet

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

About this guide

This guide explains information about Ireland and Coronavirus **COVID-19**.

Contents

How is the Government responding to Coronavirus COVID-19?

The Government has introduced measures to protect the public by delaying the spread of the virus.

Keep this leaflet in a safe place, follow the guidance and keep up to date with advice at www.hse.ie

What is Coronavirus COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It's caused by a virus called Coronavirus.

Coronavirus **COVID-19** is spread in sneeze or cough droplets. Current evidence suggests that the virus can spread as easily as the flu virus that circulates every winter.

Viruses can be easily spread to other people and you are normally infectious until all your symptoms have gone.

Coronavirus **COVID-19** may survive on surfaces if someone who has it coughs or sneezes onto it. Simple household disinfectants can kill the virus on surfaces.

The evidence so far suggests that:

- **80%** of cases – Patients experience mild illness and make a full recovery within a few weeks

- **Around 14%** of cases – Patients experience more severe illness

- **Around 6%** of cases – Patients experience critical illness

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What are the symptoms of Coronavirus COVID-19?

It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to appear.
The most common symptoms are:

- **A Cough** – This can be any kind of cough, usually dry but not always

- **A Fever** – High temperature over 38 degrees Celsius

- **Shortness of Breath**

- **Breathing Difficulties**

You may display one, some or all of these symptoms.

If you are experiencing worrying symptoms, you should contact your GP **OR** call HSELive 1850 24 1850.

COVID-19 Coronavirus Symptoms

Symptoms	Coronavirus Symptoms range from mild to severe	Cold Gradual onset of symptoms	Flu Abrupt onset of symptoms
Fever	Common	Rare	Common
Cough	Common – Usually Dry	Mild	Common – Usually Dry
Shortness of Breath	Sometimes	No	No
Aches and Pains	Sometimes	Common	Common
Sore Throat	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
Headaches	Sometimes	Rare	Common
Fatigue	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
Runny or Stuffy Nose	Rare	Common	Sometimes
Diarrhoea	Rare	No	Sometimes for Children
Sneezing	No	Common	No

Sources: World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

How can I protect myself from getting Coronavirus COVID-19?

Wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face with your hands. Hand gels with at least 60% alcohol content can be used if soap and water are not available.

How to wash your hands with soap and water

1. Wet your hands with warm water and apply soap.

2. Rub your hands together until the soap forms a lather.

3. Rub the top of your hands, between your fingers and under your fingernails.

4. Do this for about 20 seconds.

5. Rinse your hands under running water.

6. Dry your hands with a clean towel or paper towel.

A video demonstration is available at **hse.ie/handhygiene**

When coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue. Put used tissues into a closed bin and wash your hands.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces. Use regular household disinfectants to clean surfaces.

Do not shake hands or make close contact where possible.

We recommend social distancing for all people to decrease the spread of the virus. Social distance measures work by reducing contact between sick and healthy individuals.

We also recommend that you reduce social interactions to help protect yourself from getting the virus. Reduce the number of people you meet day to day.

Some of the things you can do include:

- Reduce interactions with people outside the workplace and the home

- Increase your distance from others – keep separate by at least 1 metre or **3ft**, ideally at least 2 metres or **6ft**

- Don't shake hands

- Ideally avoid communal sleeping areas

- Avoid crowded places

- Work from home if possible

When in crowded settings like public transport or a supermarket, practise personal protective measures by:

- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth **AND**

- Cleaning your hands often

Who are at-risk groups?

There are some groups of people who may be more at risk of serious illness if they catch Coronavirus **COVID-19**.

These groups include:

- People over 75 are particularly vulnerable

- All people aged 60 years and over

- People **adults and children** with long-term medical conditions including people with cardiac and respiratory conditions

- People whose immune system is impaired due to disease or treatment including cancer patients

- Patients with any condition that can affect respiratory function or breathing

- Residents of nursing homes and other long-stay settings including disability, mental health and older persons services

- All over 50-year olds within the specialist disability health services

- All people in the specialist disability health services with an underlying health problem

Further support

The charity ALONE, in partnership with the Department of Health and HSE, has a Coronavirus **COVID-19** support line for older people.

Older people can contact ALONE on **0818 222 024**.
The line is open every day, 8am-8pm.

The **NCBI Helpline** is available 8am-8pm Monday to Friday. Staff are on hand to provide practical and emotional support and advice as well as information on the services that are available to the 55,000 people living with blindness and serious visual impairment in Ireland. Contact the NCBI Helpline on **1850 33 43 53**.

What should I do if I'm feeling unwell?

If you are experiencing flu-like symptoms like fever and/or cough, you should immediately self-isolate regardless of travel or contact history. We explain how to self-isolate on page 11.

If you are experiencing these symptoms and are concerned you have been in contact with a person infected with Coronavirus **COVID-19**, self-isolate and contact your GP **family doctor** by phone. **Do not go to your GP surgery in person.**

Your GP will assess you and decide if a test for Coronavirus **COVID-19** is necessary.

You can also call **HSELive on 1850 24 1850** for further guidance.

How should I limit social interaction?

Limited social interaction is avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible. You may need to do this if you are a close contact of a confirmed case of Coronavirus **COVID-19**. This is to stop other people from getting the virus if you develop symptoms.

If you are told to limit social interaction, you should:

- Reduce interactions with people outside the workplace and the home

- Increase your distance from others – keep separate by at least 1 metre or **3ft**, ideally at least 2 metres or **6ft**

- Don't shake hands

- Ideally avoid communal sleeping areas

- Avoid crowded places

- Work from home if possible

You can still go outside for walks, runs or cycles on your own.

However, you should avoid spending more than 15 minutes in close contact with other people.

What will I need if I'm told to stay at home?

To help stop the spread of Coronavirus COVID-19 you may be asked to either:

Limit social interactions with other people
OR
Self-isolate

Here are some practical steps you can take now which will be useful if you become unwell:

- Alert close family, friends and neighbours over the phone and tell them that you are not feeling well and are unable to receive visitors

- Organise in advance to get someone to do shopping for you. If you are getting something delivered to your home, make sure it is left outside the front door for you to get it rather than bringing people into your home

- Make an up-to-date list of your medicines. If you become unwell, this is important information especially if you need treatment from a different doctor than usual

- There is no need to order extra medicines over and above normal requirements. Doing so will reduce supply of medicines for others. The supply of medicines will continue

If you have symptoms, please do not attend your pharmacy in person. You can phone your pharmacist if you need to order a prescription. If you need to collect prescription or non-prescription medicines, ask a family member or friend to do so.

How should I self-isolate?

Self-isolation means staying indoors and completely avoiding contact with other people. You may need to do this if you have symptoms of Coronavirus **COVID-19**. This is to stop other people from getting it.

If you have symptoms then **you MUST self-isolate** and **contact your GP by phone**. If they think you need to get tested for the virus, they will organise this.

While you wait for the test results or if you test positive but have mild symptoms, you can self-isolate at home.

Self-isolating Guidelines

The following guidelines 1–10 should be followed by people who have to self-isolate due to Coronavirus **COVID-19**.

1   Stay at home

Do not go to work, college, school, religious services, social gatherings or public areas. Do not use public transport or taxis until you are well.

2   Keep away from other people in your home as much as you can

Avoid physical contact with other people in your household. Stay in a room with the window open. If possible, you should use a separate toilet and bathroom to the rest of the household. If this is not possible, make sure these areas are kept clean.

3   Wash your hands often

Keep your hands clean by washing them regularly with soap and water. **This is one of the most important things you can do.**

4   Cover your coughs and sneezes

When coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue. Put used tissues into a closed bin and wash your hands.

5   Avoid sharing things

You should avoid sharing dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding or other items with other people in your home. After you use these items, they should be washed in a dishwasher or alternatively with soap and hot water. Don't share games consoles or remote controls.

Self-isolating Guidelines Continued

6   Monitor your symptoms

If your symptoms develop or get worse, phone your GP. **If it is an emergency, call an ambulance on 112 or 999 and tell them that you may have Coronavirus COVID-19**.

7   Avoid having visitors in your home

If possible, do not allow visitors into your home or answer your door to callers.

8   Household cleaning

Many cleaning and disinfectant products sold in supermarkets can kill Coronavirus **COVID-19** on surfaces. Clean the surface as usual with a detergent, disinfectant or disinfectant wipe. Wear disposable gloves and a plastic apron if available and throw them out afterwards. Wash your hands after removing gloves and apron.

9   Laundry

Wear gloves while handling dirty laundry and wash with detergent at a temperature above 60 degrees Celsius or at the highest temperature suitable for the fabric, whichever is higher. Clean all surfaces around the washing machine and wash hands thoroughly after handling dirty laundry.

10   Managing rubbish

Use plastic bags for collecting rubbish including used tissues, gloves, masks and aprons. Dispose of rubbish bags when three-quarters full by tying the bag. Place the first bag in a second bag, which you should then also tie.

Keeping well during self-isolation

Infectious disease outbreaks, like the current Coronavirus **COVID-19**, can be worrying and can affect your mental health. While you may be anxious, there are many things you can do to support and manage your mental health during such times.

Keep yourself mobile by getting up and moving around as much as possible. If you have a garden or backyard go out and get some fresh air, but keep more than 2 metres away from other people.

Self-isolation can be boring or frustrating. It may affect your mood and feelings. You may feel low, worried or have problems sleeping.

You may find it helps to stay in touch with friends or relatives by phone or on social media. **See yourmentalhealth.ie for more advice.**

Where to go for more information and updates?

If you need more information, please go to
HSE.ie
OR
Call **HSELive on 1850 24 1850** for further guidance.

For Daily Updates Visit
www.gov.ie/health-covid-19
www.hse.ie