Guidance on COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) for workers dealing with the general public
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Public health advice posters for COVID-19 are available on Gov.ie for download and display in public offices.

What is the 2019 novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)?
A novel (new) virus that has not previously been seen in humans was identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019. COVID-19 is from the same large family of viruses (coronaviruses) that caused the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS).

How is COVID-19 spread?
COVID-19 can spread from person to person, usually after close contact with a person infected with the virus. The virus can be spread either:

- directly, through contact with an infected person's body fluids (e.g. droplets from coughing or sneezing) or
- indirectly, through contact with surfaces that an infected person has coughed or sneezed on and which are, therefore, contaminated with the virus. It is still not known how long COVID-19 virus survives on surfaces, although current information suggests the virus may survive a few hours. Simple household disinfectants can kill the virus.

One of the best ways to prevent person to person spread of respiratory viruses, including COVID-19 is to use proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette (outlined below).

How can I protect myself from getting COVID-19?

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub if your hands are not visibly dirty.
- Practice good respiratory hygiene i.e. when coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – discard tissue immediately into a closed bin and clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
- Maintain social distancing i.e. leave at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and other people, particularly those who are coughing, sneezing and have a fever.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth – if you touch your eyes, nose or mouth with your contaminated hands, you can transfer the virus from the surface to yourself.

Do I need to wear a facemask to protect me from COVID-19?

For people working with the general public in the community who are feeling well and do not have respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough, fever, shortness of breath), facemasks are not recommended because there is no evidence that using masks in this setting is of any benefit in people who are not sick. In line with the WHO guidance, the HSE is not recommending use of facemasks for people in the community setting who are feeling well and do not have symptoms. The most important action that these people can take to protect themselves from COVID-19 is regular hand-washing and good respiratory hygiene, as outlined above.

Social distance measures

The general public in Ireland are requested to practice social distancing. This means that the following:

•   Keep a space of 2 metres (6.5 feet) between you and other people

•   Do not shake hands or make close contact if possible.

All workplaces are required to facilitate social distancing.

My client/customer has recently travelled to Ireland from overseas. Are there any precautions or actions that need to be taken?

If your client/customer has returned from overseas in the previous 14 days, they should be adhering to the national advice to restrict their movements for 14 days after their date of return to Ireland.

If they have symptoms, then the person should isolate themselves (i.e. stay separate from other people), and then contact their GP/doctor straight away **by phone** for advice, informing the GP/doctor of their recent travel history. This will be explained to them by HSE staff. The GP/doctor will advise on the next steps to take, including organising testing for COVID-19 if necessary.

Further information on measures for the business and retail sector is also available.