



## Returning Healthcare Worker Contact Information leaflet

For HCWs returning from any international travel outside of the island of Ireland  
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**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 at [www.hpsc.ie](http://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.

### Please read this letter and the enclosed information leaflets carefully.

You have been identified as a possible Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) contact, as you have travelled outside of the island of Ireland. You are now excluded from work and must self-quarantine and monitor for symptoms for 14 days after your return date.

### What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that circulate among animals, with some causing illness in humans from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). In December 2019, a novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was first isolated from three patients with pneumonia, connected to the cluster of acute respiratory illness cases from Wuhan, China.

### How is COVID-19 transmitted?

Coronaviruses can be transmitted from person to person, usually after close contact with an infected patient, for example in a household, workplace or healthcare setting. Coronaviruses are mainly transmitted by large respiratory droplets and direct or indirect contact with infected secretions. Personal protective equipment (PPE) and good infection prevention and control precautions are effective at minimising risk but can never eliminate it.

### What is my risk?

We are still learning about how easily the virus spreads between people so, as a precautionary measure, we are advising Healthcare Workers with **potential exposure**, including foreign travel to self-quarantine and self-monitor for symptoms.

**During the time that you are being monitored (i.e. for 14 days after your return) :**

### You must not go to work

If asymptomatic,

- You should limit your social interactions in so far as possible. This means staying at home or your hotel room.
- Do not have visitors at home.
- Where possible, arrange your groceries online or have some family or friends drop it off to

the house.

- ✓ You should avoid social gatherings, group events and crowded settings.
- ✓ You should not attend school, work, social or sporting events or training.
- ✓ You can go outside on your own for walks, runs or cycles.
- ✓ You should not use public transport.
- ✓ You should avoid contact with the elderly, those with chronic health problems and pregnant women.
- ✓ Avoid the use of anti-pyretics, (for example paracetamol, ibuprofen) while undertaking monitoring in case they mask symptoms.
- ✓ You should not travel outside Ireland.
- ✓ If you must travel within Ireland, please discuss this with the staff from the Occupational Health Department who you will have had contact with during this period.

These restrictions can be a source of stress for some people. There are many things that 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, Sudoku, 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 humor 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 happens next?**

For 14 days after your return from travel, please monitor yourself for the following symptoms (Fever, Cough, Shortness of Breath, Difficulty Breathing).

### **If you develop a fever, a cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing:**

**Immediately isolate yourself from others (for example stay in a different room from the rest of your family with the door closed).**

- ✓ **Do not attend** your GP, including their out-of-hours/on-call service.
- ✓ **Do not attend** your local Emergency Department unless told to do so Occupational Health,

Public Health or the ED Consultant.

- You should phone the Occupational Health Service during the hours set out below and identify yourself as a symptomatic returning healthcare worker. 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**).

**Contact Details:**

- Occupational Health Service: Hours \_\_\_\_\_ Days: \_\_\_\_\_ : Phone \_\_\_\_\_
- GP Out of Hours service: \_\_\_\_\_
- Employee Assistance and Counseling Service (24-hour Free phone): **1800409388**

Further information including frequently asked questions is available at [www.hpse.ie](http://www.hpse.ie) at the following link:

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