



Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Close Contact Information Leaflet V6.0, 18.03.2020 (WHWU)

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 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 close contact of a case of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). As a result, you are now required to self-quarantine and will require active close contact monitoring for 14 days after your last unprotected exposure to a case of COVID-19 under the supervision of the Occupational Health Service (OHS).

The aim of active close contact monitoring is to identify close contacts who develop symptoms consistent with Novel Corona Virus at the earliest opportunity, to help prevent the further spread of the virus to family, friends and colleagues and to fast track symptomatic close contacts to the appropriate medical facility for further assessment, appropriate isolation and treatment if necessary.

What is my risk?

Coronaviruses can be transmitted from person to person, usually after close contact with an infected patient, for example in a household, workplace or health care setting. Because it is likely that you have had close contact with someone who has COVID-19, there is a risk that you might have picked up the virus and could become unwell or pass the virus on to other people.

During the time that you are being monitored (i.e. for 14 days after your last unprotected exposure to a case of COVID-19):

- **You must not remain at work.**
- 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.
- 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.
- 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. See advice enclosed “**Recommendations to prevent the spread of infection**”.
- Do not donate blood for at least 28 days after your close contact with a Coronavirus case

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, 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 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?

1. For 14 days after your last unprotected exposure to a case of COVID-19, please monitor yourself for the following symptoms (**Fever, Cough, Shortness of Breath, Difficulty Breathing**) and record them each day on the sheet enclosed.
2. Each day you will receive a call/text from the OHS asking if you have developed any of the aforementioned symptoms. **It is important that you respond to this call/text and if you miss a call, return it as soon as possible.**

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

- a. Immediately put on one of the surgical masks provided in this pack 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.
- d. **Do not attend** your local Emergency Department unless told to do so Occupational Health, Public Health or the ED Consultant.
- e. You should phone the **Occupational Health Service during the hours set out below** at the number below and identify yourself as a **symptomatic close contact** of the Novel Corona Virus. 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: _____

Employee Assistance and Counseling Service (24-hour Freephone) 1800 409388

Further information including frequently asked questions is available at www.hpse.ie at the following link: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/frequentlyaskedquestions/>

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