



## Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Close Contact Information Leaflet V9.0, 20<sup>th</sup> Apr 2020

**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 close contact of a case of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) based on the Contact Tracing Risk Assessment of Healthcare Workers with Potential Workplace Exposure to Covid-19 Case. As a result, you are now required to restrict movements 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 does the monitoring involve?**

During the period of monitoring you will be contacted daily by Occupational Health or their linked services. This may be by phone but is usually by text, reminding you to contact Occupational Health if you develop any symptoms of COVID-19.

### **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 work.**

- You should limit your social interactions in so far as possible. This means staying at home or your hotel room.
- You must adhere to national guidance on social distancing and restricted movement
- Where possible, arrange your groceries online or have some family or friends drop it off to the house.
- You can go outside on your own for walks, runs or cycles.
- You should not use public transport.
- You should avoid contact with at risk or highly vulnerable people  
<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/at-risk-groups.html>.
- 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.
- 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 humour 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 reminding you to contact your Occupational Health Service if you develop any symptoms.

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

- a. You need to self-isolate straight away: If you have a surgical mask, put it on 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 or your local Emergency Department unless told to do so by Occupational Health or your GP.
- d. You should phone the **Occupational Health Service (see below link for contact numbers)** 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).**

If you are tested for coronavirus and it comes back negative, you should still complete the 14 days restricted movements.

*Please Note: As you are a Healthcare Worker you MAY be given derogation by your manager to return to work if you are essential to that service, which means you may be allowed to work with additional monitoring. However, your manager will contact you if this is the case. If you do return to work you must continue to restrict movements and adhere to these instructions outside of work. You will be asked to do additional monitoring while in work, which will be coordinated by your manager. You can only return to work if you have no symptoms. See 'Further Information' on this page for link.*

### Contact Details

Occupational Health Service: \_\_\_\_\_

See <http://workwell.ie/contact-list/contact-your-local-occupational-health-service/>

GP Out of Hours: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Assistance and Counselling Service: Local Contact Details: \_\_\_\_\_

See <https://healthservice.hse.ie/filelibrary/staff/employee-assistance-programme-contact-details-for-counsellors.pdf>

### Further Information

Further information including frequently asked questions is available at the following link:

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

Or you can contact the COVID-19 HCW helpdesk – **1850 420 420**

9am-6pm Mon-Fri; 10am-4pm Sat-Sun;

Specific Information regarding restricting movements and self-isolation at home is available on the

HPSC website <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/selfisolationathome/>

Guidance on the 'Derogation for the return to work of Healthcare Workers (HCW) who have been advised to restrict their movements BUT are identified as essential for critical service' is available at

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