

It is usually not possible to be confident where and when a person caught infection with COVID-19. The infection happens some days before the person gets sick. The infection is almost always caught from being close to an infectious person. Some people who spread the infection have no symptoms and do not know that they are infectious.

If you get COVID-19 7 days after you came to hospital, you probably caught it in the hospital. We count this as probably hospital acquired COVID-19. You may have caught it from another patient, from a visitor or from a staff member. It is usually not possible to be confident who you got infection from.

If you've been in hospital for less than 7 days and you get symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, you may have caught COVID-19 before you arrived. We usually do not count that as hospital acquired COVID-19.

Hospitals have a lot of measures in place to protect people from catching COVID-19 in hospital as much as possible. This works well for most people most of the time. It does not work for everyone all the time. There is a risk of catching COVID for any patient, staff member or visitor in an acute hospital.

There are things you can do to help to protect yourself from catching COVID in hospital.

- Keep to yourself as much as you can while in hospital.
- Wear a mask when asked to do so
- Keep your distance (at least 1 m) from other people
- Clean your hands with alcohol hand rub or wash them with soap and water
- Manage without visitors or a support person if you can especially if your stay is short
- Make sure you are up to date with vaccination including booster vaccination.

Vaccination and Hospital acquired COVID-19

The COVID-19 vaccine is very good at protecting people from getting very seriously ill if they catch COVID-19. The vaccine can also help to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19.

If you are up to date with the COVID-19 vaccine (primary vaccine and booster) and if you catch COVID-19 you will probably not get very sick and will probably make a speedy recovery.

If you have not had vaccine or if you have only had one dose of vaccine you are at much greater risk of severe illness if you catch COVID-19.

If you are immunocompromised you are more likely to get seriously ill if you catch COVID-19 in hospital.

If you are not up to date with your vaccination the HSE urges you to get vaccinated as soon as possible after admission to hospital. Talk to your nurse or doctor at any time if you decide to take vaccine. The hospital will be able to get you a dose of vaccine as soon as practical once you are well enough to take an additional dose of vaccine. The vaccine dose or doses can take some time to work but the sooner you get the vaccine the sooner you start to have benefit.

There is more information on www.hse.ie/covid19