

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions for people with disabilities and family carers*

* 13/01/2021: This document will be reviewed regularly as required in light of updated Public Health guidance

List of helplines

HSE: 1850 24 1850	Inclusion Ireland: 0818 559891	Family Carers Ireland: 1800 240724	ALONE: 0818 222 024	NALA: 1800 20 20 56	Samaritans: 116 123	Barnardos Parent Support: 1800 910123	Parentline: 1890 927277
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List of helpline numbers for Local Authorities Community Support Fora

Carlow County Council 1800 814300 covidsupport@carlowcoco.ie	Limerick County Council 1800 832005 covidsupport@limerick.ie
Cavan County Council 1800 300404 covidsupport@cavancoco.ie	Longford County Council 1800 300122 covidsupport@longfordcoco.ie
Clare County Council 1800 203600 covidsupport@clarecoco.ie	Louth County Council 1800 805817 covidsupport@louthcoco.ie
Cork City Council 1800 222226 covidsupport@corkcity.ie	Mayo County Council 094 9064660 covidsupport@mayococo.ie
Cork County Council 1800 805819 Text 085 8709010 covidsupport@corkcoco.ie	Meath County Council 1800 808809 covidsupport@meathcoco.ie
Donegal County Council 1800 928982 covidsupport@donegalcoco.ie	Monaghan County Council 1800 804158 covidsupport@monaghancoco.ie
Dublin City Council 01 222 8555 covidsupport@dublincity.ie	Offaly County Council 1800 818181 covidsupport@offalycoco.ie
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council 01 2713199 covidsupport@dlrcoco.ie	Roscommon County Roscommon 1800 200727 covidsupport@roscommoncoco.ie
Fingal County Council 1800 459059 covidsupport@fingal.ie	Sligo County Council 1800292765 covidsupport@sligococo.ie
Galway City Council 1800 400150 covidsupport@galwaycity.ie	South Dublin County Council 1800 240519 covidsupport@sdblincoco.ie
Galway County Council 1800 928894 covidsupport@galwaycoco.ie	Tipperary County Council 0761 065000 covid19@tipperarycoco.ie
Kerry County Council 1800 807 009 covidsupport@kerrycoco.ie	Waterford County Council 1800 250185 covidsupport@waterfordcouncil.ie
Kildare County Council 1800 300174 covidsupport@kildarecoco.ie	Westmeath County Council 1800 805816 covidsupport@westmeathcoco.ie
Kilkenny County Council 1800 326522 covidsupport@kilkennycoco.ie	Wexford County Council 053 9196000 covidsupport@wexfordcoco.ie
Laois County Council 1800 832010 covidsupport@laoiscoco.ie	Wicklow County Council 1800 868399 covidsupport@wicklowcoco.ie
Leitrim County Council 071 650473 covidsupport@leitrimcoco.ie	

Testing for COVID 19	
<p>1. I have a disability and I have symptoms which may be COVID-19. How do I get a test?</p>	<p>You should phone your GP to discuss your symptoms. If your GP decides that you need to be tested, they will give your details to the test centre. The GP will also advise you about how to protect yourself and others while you are waiting for the test. The test centre will contact you about your appointment.</p> <p>While you wait for your test, you should behave as if you have the virus by self-isolating for 10 days. People in your household will need to restrict their movements.</p>
<p>2. I am a family carer and I have symptoms which may be COVID-19. How do I get a test?</p>	<p>Treat your symptoms at home. Drink enough water to avoid dehydration - your pee should be light yellow or clear. Paracetamol or ibuprofen may help with symptoms such as pain or fever.</p> <p>Before taking any medication, read the full package leaflet that comes with your medicine. You should also follow any advice a healthcare professional gives you.</p> <p>If your symptoms get worse or are severe, phone your GP.</p> <p>Most people will get their test results back within 3 days, but it can take longer.</p> <p>Continue to self-isolate while you wait for your results. Follow any advice your GP gives you.</p> <p>If you have been waiting longer than 4 days for your test result, phone HSELive on 1850 24 1850. This number is for the Republic of Ireland only.</p> <p>HSELive is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, and 10am to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday.</p> <p>The HSELive team will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take your details • search for your test in our database • get back to you with your result <p>This search is usually done within 24 hours, but it can take longer.</p> <p>Do not contact your GP for test results. Their phone lines need to be kept open for people who need help with symptoms.</p>

	<p>If you have not received your test results, you can stop self-isolating if both of the following apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you have had no fever for 5 days • it has been 10 days since you first developed symptoms <p>If you are getting a test it would be a good idea to write down the names of all the people you have been with in the week before you started to feel unwell. This will help with contact tracing.</p>
<p>3. I cannot attend a test centre because I am looking after a family member who cannot be left alone. Can I be tested at home?</p>	<p>You should ask your GP about this when discussing your symptoms.</p>
<p>4. I have an appointment for a test but I have no way of getting there.</p>	<p>You should let your GP know this when discussing your symptoms. You could contact your Local Authority's Community Supports Forum to find out whether they can arrange to bring you to the test centre. (See the list of county numbers on page 1)</p>
<p>Preventing infection</p>	
<p>5. I've been advised to self-isolate and because I'm looking after someone at home that will be very difficult.</p>	<p>Every household will have received the COVID-19 Public Information Booklet which gives information on what to do. The booklet is also in Easy Read and other languages at: https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/.</p> <p>If the person you are caring for is at high medical risk, you should contact your regular service provider immediately. If you don't have a regular service provider, contact your Public Health Nurse or Local Disability Manager (HSE Disability Services). You can also call one of the helplines on page 1 for information and advice.</p> <p>If you need help in developing a new care plan or routine, contact Family Carers Ireland.</p> <p>If the person you are caring for is not at high risk and there is someone else in the house who can look after them instead, you should isolate yourself as much as possible:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stay in one room with a window you can open. 2. If you can, use a toilet and bathroom that no one else in the house uses. 3. If you have to share a bathroom with others, use the bathroom last and then clean it thoroughly. 4. Do not share food, dishes, drinking glasses, cups, knives, forks and spoons, clothing, towels and bedding with the other people in your house.

	<p>If there is no-one else who can look after the person you care for, follow the guidelines as closely as you can, such as not sharing food, dishes or towels. You should also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear a face mask • Wash your hands thoroughly and repeatedly • Keep a safe distance whenever possible
<p>6. What should I ask healthcare staff to do in order to prevent infection when they come in to my house?</p>	<p>Health and social care staff who visit homes, including home helps and PAs, have been given clear guidance.</p> <p>Where COVID-19 is not suspected or confirmed, they should carry on with what they usually do, in particular:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Clean their hands with soap and water or with hand sanitiser when they arrive and before they leave your house b) Not touch their face with their hands c) Not eat or drink in your home d) Cover their nose and mouth with a tissue if they cough or sneeze e) Stay at least 1 metre from people, except when they are providing direct personal care. <p>If staff are not keeping to these standards, you should contact your service provider.</p> <p>Healthcare staff must wear masks when providing care to people which requires them to be within 2 metres of that person, regardless of where that person has COVID-19 or not.</p> <p>If anyone in your house has a new cough, a raised temperature, is short of breath or reports a loss or change in sense of smell or taste, you should contact their GP and the service provider right away before the health staff or home support arrives.</p>
<p>7. Where can I get Personal Protective Equipment? No-one in my household has or may have COVID-19.</p>	<p>Personal Protective Equipment, or PPE, is protective clothing, such as masks or gloves, and its use depends on the circumstances. PPE is not required by family members for normal routine care if COVID-19 infection is not suspected or confirmed.</p> <p>Gloves and aprons are only needed for direct personal care and Public Health Nurses usually supply these for Medical Card/Long Term Illness card holders.</p> <p>Some charities and service providers, including Family Carers Ireland, have received donations or funding for Personal Protective Equipment to use in the home. For more information, contact Family Carers Careline at 1800 240724.</p>
<p>What happens if a person with a disability or a family carer gets COVID-19?</p>	
<p>8. I'm a family carer. What plans or supports are in place to look after</p>	<p>Each HSE Community Health Organisation has an Area Crisis Management Team and all services have plans for providing supports during COVID-19.</p> <p>If the person you are caring for is at high risk, you should already have contact from a 'Key Point of Contact' in your regular</p>

<p>the person I care for if I am unwell, or have to self-isolate or go into hospital?</p>	<p>service. If not, you should ring your regular service provider to discuss an emergency plan. If you don't have a service provider, contact your Public Health Nurse or Disability Manager (HSE Disability Service). You may also ring one of the helplines above on page 1 for advice.</p> <p>If the person you care for is not at high risk, you should contact your regular service provider to find out how they can help you. Services are exploring together how they can reach out to people with disabilities and their family carers, and provide them with support in different ways - telephone helplines, practical supports such as help with shopping and, when essential, help at home.</p> <p>You could complete Family Carers Ireland's Emergency Care Plan with your family member's needs, their likes and dislikes and routines. This will help if someone needs to take over caring. It is available at www.familycarers.ie. If you need help in developing your care plan, you can contact Family Carers Ireland Careline (see number on page 1).</p> <p>You can also complete the HSE Health Passport for people with an intellectual disability. https://healthservice.hse.ie/filelibrary/onmsd/hse-health-passport-for-people-with-intellectual-disability.pdf or short version: https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/</p>
<p>9. I have a disability. What happens if I get sick or test positive for COVID-19 and have to self-isolate or go to hospital?</p>	<p>You should call your regular service provider to find out how they can help you. If you don't have a service provider contact your Public Health Nurse or local Disability Manager (HSE Disability Services). You may also ring one of the helplines on page 1 for advice.</p> <p>Services are exploring together how they can reach out to people with disabilities and their family carers, and provide them with support in different ways such as telephone support and, when it is essential, help at home.</p> <p>It may be helpful to write down your needs, medication and routines and keep it handy. This will help the staff if you need to go to hospital.</p> <p>You could complete the HSE Health Passport for people with an intellectual disability. A friend or support person can help you to fill this in. You might be confused if you get sick, and this will help healthcare staff to understand your needs if they don't know you already. https://healthservice.hse.ie/filelibrary/onmsd/hse-health-passport-for-people-with-intellectual-disability.pdf or short version: https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/</p>
<p>10. If someone in my house has or may have COVID-19, will I continue to receive home care?</p>	<p>If you think someone in your house has or may have COVID-19, it is important that you contact your home care or health service provider immediately so that they can put a home care plan in place.</p>

<p>11. I am caring for someone at home and someone in the household has or may have COVID-19. Where can I get Personal Protective Equipment to use?</p>	<p>If someone in your house has or may have COVID-19 infection, immediately call your GP or PHN for advice. Tell them if the person that you care for is at high risk.</p>
<p>12. Where can I get guidance on how to use Personal Protective Equipment?</p>	<p>There is information about how to put on and take off PPE on www.hseland.ie. You need to register to access this site, but that's very easy. You don't need to be a member of staff, you can register as a volunteer.</p>
<p>13. Will I be allowed to go with the person I support if they are admitted to hospital with COVID-19?</p>	<p>The HPSC's <i>COVID-10 Guidance on visitations to Inpatient Areas of Acute Hospitals including Children's Hospitals, rehabilitation services and other healthcare settings providing a similar intensity of care</i> (V1.1 23.12.2020 confirms that a parent, guardian or carer accompanying a child or a person with a disability for whom the presence of this accompanying person is essential to support care will be permitted https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/infectionpreventionandcontrolguidance/visitorsvisiting/Guidance%20on%20visitations%20to%20Acute%20Hospitals.pdf</p> <p>You could complete Family Carers Ireland's Emergency Care Plan with your family member's needs, likes and dislikes and routines, which will help the healthcare staff if they need to go to hospital. The Emergency Care Plan is available at www.familycarers.ie .</p> <p>You can also help the person you support to complete the HSE Health Passport for people with an intellectual disability. https://healthservice.hse.ie/filelibrary/onmsd/hse-health-passport-for-people-with-intellectual-disability.pdf or short version: https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/</p>
<p>14. Where can I find guidance on caring for a person diagnosed with COVID-19, especially about infection control?</p>	<p>The COVID-19 Information Booklet sent to all households gives you information on what to do. The booklet is also in Easy Read and other languages on https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/</p> <p>Courses in infection control and putting on and taking off PPE are available on www.hseland.ie. You need to register to access this site, but that's very easy. You do not need to be a member of staff, you can register as a volunteer.</p>

Assistance with everyday tasks

<p>15. Can I get help such as collecting prescriptions or grocery shopping while I am self-isolating or cocooned at home?</p>	<p>You can call the ALONE help line, 0818 222024. It is linked to a national network of volunteers who can provide practical supports, such as collecting shopping or medications for those unable to leave home.</p> <p>Community Support Fora are now set up in each Local Authority to provide supports such as:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection and delivery of food and essentials, fuel and medication • Transport to testing centres, assessment hubs, GPs and hospitals • Helping with loneliness and isolation • Garda related matters • Other medical or health needs <p>Helplines for Local Authority Community Support Fora are listed on page 1.</p>
<p>16. I'm due to attend a hospital medical appointment but haven't heard if it will go ahead. Should I still attend?</p>	<p>You can see information about hospital appointments with a list of public hospitals at: https://www2.hse.ie/services/hospital-service-disruptions/hospital-service-disruptions-covid19.html.</p> <p>Some patients' hospital appointments have changed because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Your hospital will phone you if you have an upcoming appointment and it is going ahead. You do not need to take any action. Do not go to hospital unless your appointment is confirmed.</p> <p>Emergency departments (EDs) are still open and are here to help in all medical emergencies.</p> <p>In particular, if you or someone else is showing signs of a stroke or heart attack do not be afraid to go to your local ED. Call 112 or 999 immediately for emergency help.</p>
<p>17. I find it hard to understand what I read about COVID -19. Is there information which is easy to read?</p>	<p>The COVID -19 Information Booklet sent to all households gives information on what to do. The booklet is also in Easy Read and other languages at: https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/</p> <p>Many organisations who work to support people with disabilities and their families have produced easy to read information guides on COVID-19. See Inclusion Ireland, Enable Ireland and National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers websites for easy read information on a range of COVID -19 topics which can be printed off. https://www.inclusionireland.ie/content/page/corona-virus http://www.fedvol.ie/ https://www.enableireland.ie/</p> <p>The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is also providing help with understanding health information. You can visit their website to find COVID -19 words and terms explained. https://www.nala.ie/covid-19-supports/ You can also Freephone 1800 20 20 56 to talk through the information with a NALA tutor or you can text LEARN to 50050.</p>

COVID -19 Financial Supports	
18. What social welfare supports are available to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic?	<p>You can find answers to all these questions on the Family Carers Ireland website https://familycarers.ie/covid-19/covid-social-welfare-faqs where you can also select the option of transferring to Family Carers Ireland Careline.</p> <p>You can also phone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) Income Support Helpline for COVID-19 1890 800 024 or - Family Carers Ireland Freephone Careline 1800 240724
19. I'm a family carer and receive Carer's Allowance. I also work part-time for less than 18.5 hours per week. I've just lost my job due to COVID-19. Can I apply for the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment?	
20. I receive Disability Allowance and work part-time. I've just been laid off by my employer due to COVID-19. Can I apply for the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment?	
21. I can't make it to the post office to pick up payments. How long does the post office keep the payments for?	
22. Our household costs including electricity and fuels bills have gone up because we are now all at home. Is there any financial support we can claim to help with these increased costs?	
23. I haven't lost my job, but I'm worried that if I continue to work, I will be at risk of contracting COVID -19 and infecting another vulnerable household member. If I give up work, rather than being formally let go by my employer, am I eligible for COVID -19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment?	
24. Where will my COVID -19 Unemployment Payment be paid?	
25. How should I apply for COVID -19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment?	
Disability services and supports	
26. Will our respite or home care service be suspended during the COVID-19 crisis?	This will be decided locally, taking into account the risks of infection. Contact your regular respite or home care service to find out more.
27. My family member usually lives in a community group home or residential care. Because of COVID-	If someone is not currently living in a community group home or residential care setting they cannot be charged. If this has happened, you should contact the service provider immediately, and ask them to repay the money that is owed.

<p>19 they have come to live with me. Do they still have to pay for their residential service?</p>	
<p>28. What help is there for families who are caring for someone with a disability at home?</p>	<p>Contact your regular service provider to find out about what they have put in place and how they can advise and support you. If you don't have a regular service provider, phone your Public Health Nurse or Disability Manager, HSE. You can also ring one of the helplines above on page 1 for information.</p>
<p>29. I am a family carer and without our normal supports and services I am struggling to cope. Where can I get help?</p>	<p>If you need help in developing a care plan or routine, you can contact Family Carers Ireland (see phone number on page 1).</p> <p>The HSE and government departments who are planning measures in this pandemic are very aware of the additional stresses COVID-19 puts on people with disabilities and family carers. HSE and voluntary agencies providing disability services for children, adults and families are working hard to find different ways to provide support during the pandemic.</p> <p>The HSE is working in partnership with umbrella groups who represent service providers and family groups, including Inclusion Ireland, Family Carers Ireland and ALONE, to plan supports and information for families. Work is also taking place to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities and their families are included in all of the planning being undertaken by the National Public Health Emergency Team, which has a Vulnerable Persons Working Group.</p>
<p>30. I hear lots of people talking about stockpiling - should I be worried about running out of essential supplies such as continence pads or special diet supplements?</p>	<p>There are no reported shortages of continence products at present. If you usually receive continence products from the HSE this should continue. Contact your local HSE Continence Officer if you have any questions.</p> <p>Dietary supplies which are on prescription appeared to have been temporarily in short supply when people filled prescriptions earlier than usual in March. However, the HSE is not aware of any shortages.</p>
<p>33. If I stop or reduce my home care service, because of the risk of infection or because other family members are now at home, will my service be fully restored when the crisis is over?</p>	<p>Yes, based on your assessed need at that time.</p>