Travel & New Entry Healthcare Worker (High risk variant) Information leaflet

For new entry HCWs and HCWs returning from travel outside of the island of Ireland

V1 5th Feb 2021

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 possible Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) contact, as you have travelled from a country with SARS-CoV-2 variants with multiple spike protein mutations.

Based on current government travel advice, you must **self-isolate** and self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days after your return date (Or arrival date for new entrant). You CANNOT be derogated to return to work.

Your household contacts must restrict movement for 14 days from their last contact with you, regardless of your test results. If you test positive your household contacts will also need to self-isolate for 14 days from their last contact.

**You must**

- Stay at home, in a room with a window you can open.
- Keep away from other people - especially older people or anyone with a long-term medical condition.
- Use a different bathroom to others in your household, if possible.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes using a tissue - clean your hands properly after.
- Ask friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food or supplies - if they stand back from the door, you can speak with them.
- Wash your hands properly and often.
- Use your own towel - do not share a towel with others.
- Clean your room every day with a household cleaner or disinfectant.

**Don’t**

- Do not go outside unless you have your own outdoor space where you can get some fresh air away from other people.
- Do not go to work, school, religious services or public areas.
- Do not share your things. For example, food, dishes, drinking glasses or other household items.
- Do not use public transport or taxis.
- Do not have any visitors to your home.
Testing for those who have travelled from a country with additional restrictions, due to SARS-CoV-2 variants with multiple spike protein mutations,

- Refer yourself for a COVID-19 test in the public system, which can be arranged by your GP. If you don’t have a GP, ring any GP and they can arrange this for you. This COVID-19 test should be done 5 days after arrival in Ireland or as soon as possible after this. A “not detected” test does not affect your requirement to remain in self-isolation for the duration of the 14-day period.
- If you have already had a test done in a private clinic or through a private laboratory, you need to complete the 14 days of self-isolation, regardless of the result of test carried out privately. You should also organise a repeat test in a public laboratory with your GP.
- If you develop any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 at any stage, irrespective of previous testing, phone your GP or HSE Live at 1850 241 850 and alert them of your recent travel overseas.
- People living in the same household as you, who have not travelled, must also stay at home and restrict their movements for 14 days from their last contact with you, regardless of the result of your test in the person who travelled.

Self-care:
These restrictions can be a source of stress for some people. Many things 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 use 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 following your return from travel, please self-monitor yourself for the following respiratory symptoms (Fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, loss or change in sense of smell or taste).
If you develop any potential symptoms:

Continue to self-isolate immediately and ensure the following:

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

b. You should phone your GP and identify yourself as a symptomatic returning healthcare worker.

c. If acutely unwell you may need to contact the ambulance service. (Please check local GP /GP out of hours contact details and add below).

If you are tested for coronavirus and the result is negative, you should still complete the 14 days self-isolation. If test results indicate you have COVID-19, please let your manager and Occupational Health Service know, as you will need to start self-isolation from the date symptoms began. (See below link for contact numbers). Your GP will advise re medical management.

Contact Details:

- GP Service: _______________________
- GP Out of Hours service: _______________________
- Employee Assistance and Counselling Service Contact Details: _______________________

See https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefits-services/benefits/counselling.html

Occupational Health Service:

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

Further Information


Frequently asked questions regarding COVID-19 are available following link:

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

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

9 am-6 pm Mon-Fri;

Further 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/