

## Information for “Close Contacts” of a confirmed case of COVID-19

This information sheet provides advice to people who have had close contact with a person who has been confirmed as having COVID-19.

### **A close contact is:**

Anyone who has had greater than 15 minutes of face-to-face (less than 2 meters distance) contact with a confirmed case in any setting. This includes:

- Household contacts - defined as living or sleeping in the same home, individuals in shared accommodation sharing kitchen or bathroom facilities and sexual partners
- Closed space contact. For those contacts who have shared a closed space with a confirmed case for longer than two hours, a risk assessment should be undertaken taking into consideration the size of the room, ventilation and the distance from the case
- Healthcare workers who have not worn appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) or who have had a breach of PPE
- Passengers on an aircraft sitting within two seats (in any direction) of the COVID-19 case, travel companions or persons providing care, and crew members serving in the section of the aircraft where the case was seated

### **What do I need to do if I am a close contact?**

You will be contacted by a contact tracing team if you have been identified as having been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. You do not need to contact the HSE first. When you are called, you will be asked whether you have any of the following symptoms:

- A new cough – this can be a dry cough or a productive (bringing up phlegm) cough
- Shortness of breath
- Breathing difficulties
- Fever (a high temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or above on a thermometer) or chills

Even if you do not have any of these symptoms, you will be asked to begin Restricted Movements (see below for explanation), which will last until 14 days after the last time you came into contact with the person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19. Close contacts of people suspected of having COVID-19 should also be on Restricted Movements until their test result comes back.

If you work in healthcare, you need to contact your manager and let them know that you have been identified as a close contact of a case of COVID-19.

You can become a close contact more than once if you have two separate exposures – Restricted Movements will then apply to you again for 14 days after your last exposure.

### **If you have any of the symptoms above during this time:**

- You will need to immediately self-isolate (see below for what this means) and phone your GP surgery straight away.
- Your GP surgery will take your details and have your GP call you back. Your GP will discuss your symptoms with you over the phone or on a video call and advise you of the next steps you need to take, including possibly arranging testing for COVID-19.
- In the event that you are unable to contact your GP, please phone HSE Live on 1850 24 1850 and clearly explain your symptoms.

- If you get very ill and it is an emergency, you should call 999 and make sure the emergency service is aware that your symptoms might be due to COVID-19
- Do not attend your local Emergency Department or GP in person unless told to do so by a medical professional
- Follow all of the advice given by your doctor

**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.**

## **Restricted Movements vs. Self-isolation**

### **Restricted Movements**

Restricted Movements means avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible by staying at home or in your hotel, and applies when you have a higher chance of developing COVID-19 but don't yet have any symptoms. Many people who have been exposed will not develop COVID-19, but they should all still restrict movements in case they do. Restricted movements is sometimes also called self-quarantine.

You can still go outside for walks, runs or cycles on your own, but you should not spend time in close contact with other people.

- You do this to stop other people, particularly vulnerable or high-risk people in your community, from getting coronavirus.
- You need to restrict your movements for 14 days if you do not have symptoms of COVID-19 but you are:
  - a close contact of a confirmed case of coronavirus (start from the last time you were in contact)
  - returning to Ireland from another country (start from the day you arrived in Ireland)

### **Self-isolation**

Self-isolation means staying indoors and completely avoiding contact with other people. This includes staying away from other people in your household. You need to do this if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 - this is to stop other people from getting infected, especially vulnerable people in your community.

You will need to self-isolate:

- if you have symptoms of COVID-19
- before you get tested for coronavirus
- while you wait for test results
- if you have had a positive test result for coronavirus.

If you have a negative or "not detected" test result you can stop self-isolation, but if you are a close contact you need to finish the period of Restricted Movements.

If you live with other people and you are self-isolating:

- Stay in a room with a window you can open.
- If you can, use a toilet and bathroom that no one else in the house uses.
- If you have to share a bathroom with others, use the bathroom last and then clean it thoroughly.
- Do not share any items you've used with other people.

There are two criteria for finishing self-isolation, and you can only finish when both have been fulfilled:

1. It's been 14 days since your first symptoms started
2. You haven't had a fever for 5 days

For example, if you started having headaches or coughing on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month, and you had your last fever on the 12<sup>th</sup>, you need to wait until the 17<sup>th</sup> to finish self-isolation. If your last symptom was on the 6<sup>th</sup>, you would only need to wait until the 14<sup>th</sup>.

You can get more information on [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

For Citizens information on COVID-19 follow this link

[https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/covid19\\_overview.html](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/covid19_overview.html)