

Managing a COVID-19 infection at home

Version 1.1 19.10.2020



The information in this leaflet is for people who have a coronavirus (COVID-19) infection and are at home. It gives some advice to you and to people who live with you or to people who help to look after you when you are managing your coronavirus infection at home or if you have been discharged home from hospital.

If you go home from hospital less than 14 days after you got sick with COVID-19, your nurse or doctor will be able to tell you how many days (if any) that extra precautions are needed when you go home. If you go home from hospital more than 14 days after you first got sick, you usually do not need to take any special precautions but your nurse or doctor will tell you if you do.

This leaflet is not for people who are leaving hospital for a nursing home or other similar residential care setting.

Self-isolation

Self-isolation means you stay at home and avoid contact with other people, including those in your household as much as you can. The advice on self-isolation below will help control the spread of COVID-19. When planning to go home, it is important to check that you have someone who can make sure that you have everything that you need in the house, who can check on you and who can get shopping and other things you might need during the days when you need to stay home.

Keep yourself safe and well while self-isolating at home

- It is very easy to become anxious and lonely when you have to spend time on your own. But remember, you can always pick up the phone and call a friend. For more information on minding your mental health during the coronavirus outbreak go to www.hse.ie or www.yourmentalhealth.ie. Older people can telephone the charity Alone on 0818 222 024 from Monday to Sunday, 8am to 8pm.
- Try and keep active by getting up and moving around as much as possible. If you have your own outdoor space, you can go out to get some fresh air but please keep away from other people, including neighbours. Maintain a distance of 2 metres. If that is not possible in your home please keep a distance of at least 1 metre from other people and wear a medical mask.
- Make sure you have someone to check in on you regularly to make sure you are well



Visit HSE.ie for updated factual information and advice, or call 1850 24 1850



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

When you are recovering from infection, you may find that your energy levels are lower than usual and this is to be expected. You may not feel able to do some of the tasks listed below. If that is the case, a member of your family, household or a home help may be able to help you until you feel better.

Watch out for signs that you are getting worse:

- ✓ If you start to feel very unwell, especially if your breathing changes or becomes difficult, telephone your doctor immediately.
- ✓ If you are very short of breath and cannot reach someone, call the emergency services on 112 or 999.

Keeping everyone safe and well while you self-isolate at home

1. Stay at home

Do not go out except if you have your own outdoor space to get some fresh air.

2. Keep away from other people in your home as much as you can

Stay in a separate room as much as you can. If it is comfortable to have the window open it may help to clear the air of any virus.

If you have to go into the same room with other people at home you should try to keep a distance of 2 metres. If that is not possible in your home please keep a distance of at least 1 metre from other people and wear a medical mask.

Wash your hands regularly. If you don't have a mask or can't bear to wear a mask then cover your mouth and nose with a clean tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you can, use a separate toilet and bathroom to the rest of the people in your home.

3. Clean your hands

Clean your hands regularly. **This is one of the most important things you can do.** Try not to touch your face.

4. Cover your coughs and sneezes

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Place used tissues into a plastic waste bag (see note below for managing rubbish), and immediately clean your hands with alcohol hand rub or wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

5. Do not share things

Do not share food, dishes, drinking glasses, cups, knives, forks and spoons or other items with other people in your household. Wash kitchen items in a dishwasher or with washing up liquid and hot water, after use. Household or rubber gloves should

be used if available. Wash and dry the gloves after each use. Hands should be washed thoroughly with soap and water after taking off the gloves.

If you use remote controls or games consoles clean them thoroughly before anyone else in the house uses them.

6. Do not have visitors in your home

Do not invite or allow unnecessary visitors to come into the home. If someone urgently needs to come to the house, maintain a distance of 2 metres. If that is not possible please keep a distance of at least 1 metre, wear a medical mask and advise them that you are not well.

7. Toileting and bathing

If possible use a toilet that no one else is using. If that is not possible and you do not have your own toilet or bathroom, clean your hands before entering, after using the toilet and before you leave the room. Do not share your towels with anyone else.

8. Household cleaning

All surfaces, such as counters, table-tops, doorknobs, banisters, bathroom fixtures, toilets and toilet handles, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables, should be cleaned every day with a cleaning product. Use your usual household cleaning products. Follow the instructions on the manufacturer's label and check they can be used on the surface you are cleaning.

Wear household or rubber gloves, if you have them, when cleaning surfaces or handling dirty laundry. Wash and dry them after use. Always wash your hands after you take off the gloves. Wash reusable cleaning cloths in a hot wash cycle of a washing machine after use. Put disposable gloves and cleaning cloths in a plastic waste bag after using them (see advice about managing rubbish below).

9. Laundry

Wash laundry at the highest temperature that the material can stand. If you have household or rubber gloves you can wear them when handling dirty laundry. Hold laundry items away from yourself. Wash your hands after handling dirty laundry, whether you used gloves or not. Do not send laundry to a laundrette.

10. Managing rubbish

Put all your personal waste including used tissues and all cleaning waste in a plastic rubbish bag. Tie the bag when it is almost full, place it into a second bin bag and tie it.

Once the bag has been tied securely leave it somewhere safe and secure for three

days before putting them out for collection by your waste company.

Caring for the person who has coronavirus: important points

If your family member or housemate needs your support, you can help by assisting with grocery shopping or grocery delivery, helping with preparation of meals, organising laundry, some housework or cleaning. See the sections earlier in the leaflet that give advice on hygiene, meals, laundry and housework. Your local authority has a [community support](#) system in place to help with shopping, collecting medicines, social isolation and essential transport.

If your family member or housemate cannot look after their personal care, then you may need to have closer contact with them. Only one person should look after them ideally, this would be someone who is not living with someone at risk of severe infection. That includes someone with a long-term illness, someone with a weak immune system and anyone older than 70 years old.

- If you are caring for the person, try and keep your distance as much as possible. Maintain a distance of 2 metres. When that is not possible please keep a distance of at least 1 metre as much as you can and wear a face covering or mask.
- If you have to touch the person to help them wear a face covering or mask and clean your hands afterwards. Do not touch your face while caring for someone who has COVID-19.
- Call the doctor for advice if the person becomes unwell, especially if they have difficulty breathing.
- If you are caring for an older person, watch out for **confusion they have not shown before**. If they aren't usually like this, even if they are not showing other symptoms, call the doctor.
- Call the emergency services at 112 or 999 if the person becomes very unwell and it is an emergency. Tell them that the person has coronavirus.

If you are looking after someone with COVID-19 there is a risk that you can become infected so you need to limit your movements as much as possible during the period you are helping the person and for 14 days¹ after your last contact with them. Please ensure you follow the personal and house hygiene guidance listed above and check the HSE [guidance](#).

More information and advice

If you need more information please visit HSE.ie or call HSELive on 1850 24 1850 for further guidance.

¹ If you are caring for a child with COVID-19 and cannot isolate from them you need to restrict your movements for 17 days after the day they became unwell (or the day of their test if they have no symptoms)