

Returning from Travel & New Entry Healthcare Worker Information leaflet

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

V13, 16th Apr 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 outside of the island of Ireland and, based on current government travel advice, you must restrict movement (see - <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b4020-travelling-to-ireland-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>). You are now excluded from work and must restrict movement and self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days after your return date.

Please note, HCWs who have travelled from 'designated high risk countries' should follow advice on mandatory quarantine as outlined on <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b4020-travelling-to-ireland-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/#designated-states-mandatory-hotel-quarantine>.

HSE HCWs, who have complied with government requirements for testing on return from other countries, may be able to exit restricted movement on receipt of a negative test result, but **they must remain out of the workplace** for 14 days.

During the time that you are Restricting Movements (i.e. for 14 days after your return):

This means:

- You must NOT go to work
- You should limit your social interactions in so far as possible. This means staying at home or your hotel room.
- You must adhere to national guidance on social distancing and restricted movement
- Where possible, arrange your groceries online or have some family or friends drop it off to the house.
- You CAN go outside on your own to exercise, so long as you can maintain social distance of 2 meters.
- You should not use public transport.
- You should avoid contact with at-risk or highly vulnerable people <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/at-risk-groups.html>.
- You should be contactable by phone at all times
- Avoid the use of anti-pyretics, (for example paracetamol, ibuprofen) while undertaking monitoring in case they mask symptoms
- 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.

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 the use of 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:

Self-isolate immediately

- 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 restricted movement unless government guidance indicates you can exit restricted movement – however, you must remain out of work in a healthcare facility for the full 14 days. 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/filelibrary/staff/employee-assistance-programme-contact-details-for-counsellors.pdf>

- Occupational Health Service: _____

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

Further Information

Government travel advice is available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b4020-travelling-to-ireland-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

Further Information regarding restricting movements is available on the HSE website <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/if-you-live-with-someone-who-has-coronavirus.html>

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/>

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;