

## 2. Information for Close Contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19



Coronavirus  
**COVID-19**  
Public Health  
Advice

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On 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2020, the Government announced a roadmap, setting out Ireland's plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions in 5 phases. The first phase commenced on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020. For more information, go to <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ad5dd0-easing-the-covid-19-restrictions-on-may-18-phase-1/>.

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

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

Anyone who has spent more than 15 minutes, face-to-face, within two meters of a person with coronavirus in any setting, for example, anyone living in the same household, or someone who has shared a closed space with a confirmed case for more than two hours.

### **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 coronavirus. You do not need to contact the HSE first. When you are called, you will be asked whether you have symptoms such as:

- 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)
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste / smell

Even if you do not have any of these symptoms, but you are a close contact of a person with COVID-19, 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. If you work in healthcare, you need to contact your manager and Occupational Health 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.

You will be referred for a test for coronavirus if you are a close contact. You may be referred for a second test if the first test was soon after your last contact. Even if you receive a negative test result you will need to continue to restrict your movements.

### **If you develop any of the above symptoms:**

- You will need to self-isolate without delay (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 coronavirus.
- 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 coronavirus.

- 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.

If you are tested for coronavirus and COVID-19 is not detected, you should still complete the 14 days restricted movements.

**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.**

### **The HSE commenced 'Active follow-up' with close contacts from Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020.**

Active follow-up (also known as active surveillance) is a daily text message to all close contacts of a person who has been diagnosed as COVID-19 positive. The text message will come from "HSE Covid19". For the 14 days from the last date of contact with the person diagnosed with COVID-19, the HSE Contact Tracing Team will send a text message to a close contact to (i) remind them of the importance of restricted movements (ii) to check if they have any symptoms related to COVID-19 and (iii) if so, to advise them to contact their G.P. or the HSE contact tracing team.

### **The HSE commenced testing of all close contacts from 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

All close contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19, whether they have symptoms or not, will be referred for coronavirus testing, in accordance with Public Health guidance. This is a change in procedure, as previously only close contacts who had symptoms were referred for a coronavirus test. Close contacts are being tested as it is known that they are the people most likely to develop coronavirus themselves. By testing close contacts early in the process, people who are carrying the virus and have little or no symptoms will be identified. If you receive a negative, or not determined, test result you will still have to restrict your movements for 14 days.

### **The HSE commenced testing of all close contacts as soon as possible and again on day 7 following last contact with a case on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2020**

All close contacts of a confirmed Case of COVID-19, whether they have symptoms or not, will be referred for a coronavirus testing as soon as possible **and AGAIN at day 7 following their last contact with the person with coronavirus** (if this is more than 24 hours after the first swab). By testing close contacts early in the process, people who are carrying the virus and have little or no symptoms will be identified. Testing people a second time is to increase the chance of identifying COVID-19 in anyone who may still have been incubating COVID-19 at the time of the first test. If you receive two negative test results you will still have to restrict your movements for 14 days after your last contact with the person who has coronavirus.

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

### **Restricted Movements**

Restricted Movements means staying at home and avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible. Many people who have been exposed to coronavirus will not develop COVID-19, but they should all still restrict movements in case they do. Restricted movements may also be known as self-quarantine.

- 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 coronavirus but you are:

- a close contact of a confirmed case of coronavirus (start from the last time you were in contact)
- living in a household with someone who has symptoms of coronavirus (for more information go to <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/factsheetsandresources/Sharing%20home.pdf>)
- returning to Ireland from another country (start from the day you arrived in Ireland).

If you work in healthcare, contact your manager / Occupation Health Department to discuss the criteria above prior to going to work.

## 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 COVID-19.

For more information on self-isolation, go to [https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/factsheetsandresources/Self-isolation%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/factsheetsandresources/Self-isolation%20(2).pdf).

If you have a “not detected” test result you can stop self-isolation 48 hours after your symptoms resolve, 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>.

If you work in healthcare, contact your manager / Occupation Health Department to discuss the criteria above prior to returning to work.

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

For Citizens Information Centre advice on coronavirus follow this link [https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/covid19\\_overview.html](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/covid19_overview.html)