



Healthcare Worker COVID-19 (Variants of Concern) Close Contact Information Leaflet

Version 4.1 - 13th July 2021

Please read this letter and the enclosed information leaflets carefully.

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 website, <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/workplace-health-and-wellbeing-unit/covid-19-guidance/> for the most up-to-date information for Healthcare Workers.

You have been identified as a close contact of a case with a Person Under Investigation of a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 **Variant of Concern (VOC)**. As a result, you are now required to restrict movement for 14 days after your last unprotected exposure to the case. You will require active close contact monitoring for the 14 days and will also undergo testing for Covid-19. If your day 0 and day 10 test is confirmed 'not detected' you will be able to exit restricted movement and return to work.

If the case that you were in contact with is confirmed NOT to have a COVID-19 VOC, you will revert to normal close contact management. You will be provided with details of this as necessary.

The aim of active close contact testing and monitoring, is to identify close contacts with pre-symptomatic COVID-19 or those who develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 at the earliest opportunity, to help prevent the further spread of the virus to family, friends and colleagues.

What does the testing and monitoring involve?

Once you have been identified as a close contact tests will be arranged for day 0 and day 10 after your last close contact with the positive case.

- If Covid-19 is detected on your test you must self isolate, there will be further testing to check the variant. If it is a possible VOC you will be required to self-isolate for 14 days from the date of that test or, if you become symptomatic, from the date symptoms began. If it is not a VOC, you will be required to self-isolate for 10 days.
- If the day 0 and day 10 tests are **confirmed as negative**, you can exit restricted movement if you have remained asymptomatic. You can then return to work.
- If you become symptomatic during the period of restricted movement, or during the week following this, you should self-isolate and immediately arrange testing via your GP.

During the period of monitoring, you will be contacted daily by Occupational Health or contact tracing service. This may be by phone but is usually by text, reminding you arrange testing if you develop any symptoms of COVID-19.

Please note: If you had COVID-19 infection detected previously or have had any COVID-19 vaccination you must still restrict movement and be tested as outlined above.

During the time that you are being monitored, if you do not develop symptoms, you must 'Restrict Movement' until you have received a confirmed day 10 'not detected' result.

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.

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 are the symptoms?

For the period of restricted movement, please monitor yourself for any respiratory symptoms. This includes the usual Covid-19 symptoms such as **Fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, loss or change in sense of smell or taste, and also milder respiratory symptoms such as sore throat or runny nose**

If you develop any potential symptoms:

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 healthcare worker, with known close contact to a case with COVID-19 VOC. If your test is positive it will need further analysis to identify the variant.
- 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 restricted movement as above. 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.

Please note, close contacts of cases with 'variants of concern' cannot be derogated to return to work early.

Contact Details

Occupational Health Service: _____

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

GP Out of Hours: _____

Employee Assistance and Counselling Service: Local Contact Details: _____

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

Further Information

Further information including frequently asked questions is available at the following link:
<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/frequentlyaskedquestions/>

Or you can contact the **HSE COVID Helpline** on **1800 700 700**.
8am to 8pm, Monday to Sunday.

Specific 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/>

Specific Information re Variants of Concern are at <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/sars-cov-2variantsofconcern/>