

COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Covid-19

Covid-19 is a novel (new) virus, not previously seen in humans, identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019. The first cases were identified in people working in a seafood and live animal market in Wuhan. It is thought that humans picked up the virus from animals at the market.

Covid-19 is spread

- directly, through contact with an infected person's body fluids (e.g. droplets from coughing or sneezing)
- indirectly, through contact with surfaces that an infected person has coughed or sneezed on and which are, therefore, contaminated with the virus.

Current information suggests the virus may survive a few hours. Simple household disinfectants can kill the virus.

Covid-19 - Symptoms

- a cough
- shortness of breath
- breathing difficulties
- fever (high temperature)

Covid-19 – Treatment

While there is no specific treatment for the virus many of the symptoms can be treated. If you or your child get the virus, your healthcare professional will advise treatment based on your symptoms.

Close contact

Close contact, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), involves either face to face contact or spending more than 15 minutes within 2 metres of an infected person. The risk of transmission through casual contact, e.g. passing by on the street or in a shop, is low.

Close contact – advice for parents, siblings, housemates, workmates

People who share living or work space with individuals classified as a close contact of a confirmed case should carry on their daily routines as normal – these individuals **have not themselves had close contact** with a confirmed case.

Contact Tracing

In the event of a confirmed case, a clinician will speak to the patient to gather details of places they visited and the people they've been in contact with since they became unwell or, in the case of international travellers, since they arrived in Ireland. This will provide a detailed picture of the people we need to contact, such as family members, colleagues or fellow travellers.

This list of people will be contacted with instruction and advice on what to do if they become symptomatic.

If a member of the contact list becomes symptomatic, we isolate and test this individual and provide treatment, if confirmed.

NB: A close contact involves either face to face contact or spending more than 15 minutes within 2 metres of an infected person. We do not contact trace persons that may have passed by on the street or in a shop. The risk of contact in that instance is very low.

Patient confidentiality

The Department of Health recognises and appreciates the public's need and desire for reliable information and is committed to providing clear, accurate and up-to-date information on Covid-19, so that the public can take appropriate personal preventative measures, such as those described on the HSE website.

It is equally important to balance this commitment to clarity and transparency against the obligation to protect individuals from potential stigmatisation and discrimination. This is achieved by respecting individual privacy as far as possible, while ensuring that all necessary information directly relevant to the public good is shared in a timely manner.

It is in the public interest not to disclose personal information which could negatively impact upon a person's willingness to disclose symptoms suggestive of Covid-19.

Restricted Movement

Individuals who have had close contact with a confirmed case of Covid-19 are asked to restrict their movements for 14 days, the incubation period of the virus. These people are deemed to be well, however public health officials will follow up with them on a daily basis, and in the event that they develop symptoms, they will be tested.

Restricted movement means avoiding crowded settings and large gatherings, for example concerts and sporting events.