



## Advice for people who share the same home with someone has or may have COVID-19 v2.0, 24.03.2020

The information in this leaflet is for people sharing a home with someone who:

- is waiting to be tested for COVID-19 infection
- is waiting for the test results for COVID-19 infection
- was waiting to be tested for COVID-19 but is not in a priority group for testing
- has symptoms of COVID-19 but is not in a priority group for testing
- has been diagnosed with COVID-19 infection and is well enough to stay at home to recover.

### What are the priority groups for testing?

With increasing numbers of people being referred for testing, our health service must now focus on testing those at greater likelihood of having COVID-19 infection, those who will benefit most from public health management, those most at risk of severe infection and essential healthcare workers. This is to make sure we protect the most vulnerable people in our community and achieve the greatest good.

Therefore priority will be given to people with symptoms of COVID-19 in the following groups:

- a) Close contacts of a confirmed case
- b) Health care workers
- c) Groups most at risk of severe infection such as persons with diabetes, immunosuppressed, chronic lung disease, chronic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, chronic renal disease, chronic liver disease and smokers.
- d) Household contacts of at-risk groups above
- e) Staff or residents in a long-term care facility
- f) Prison staff and inmates where it may be difficult to implement self-isolation advice
- g) Pregnant women to ensure they can be managed safely in hospital, minimising the risk of spread in the maternity hospital.

### What does 'restricted movements' mean?

Restricted movements means avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible. It is sometimes called 'self-quarantine'. This is to stop other people from getting COVID-19 infection because even though you do not have symptoms, you share a home with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19 infection.

Restricted movements means:

- Stay at home.
- Do not go to school, college or work.
- Do not use public transport.
- Do not go to meetings, social gatherings, group events or crowded places.
- Do not have visitors at your home.
- Do not go shopping - where possible, order your groceries online or have some family or friends drop them off.
- Keep away from older people, anyone with long-term medical conditions and pregnant women.

- Do not travel outside or within Ireland
- You can go outside for walks, runs or cycles but stay 2 meters away from others around you

### **When can I return to normal if the person who is sick at home is in one of the priority groups for testing above?**

You should continue to restrict your movements while the person who is sick in your home awaits the test and the test results. Then:

- If the person in your home is diagnosed with COVID-19 infection and you remain well, you should restrict your movements for 14 days from the time they started self-isolating at home. In some instances self-isolation of the person with COVID-19 infection at home is not possible. In that case your doctor will give you specific advice.
- If the person in your home is not diagnosed with COVID-19, you can go back to normal activity and work immediately. It is possible that they have another infectious illness, such as flu and you should still avoid contact with them as much as possible for 48 hours after their symptoms have gone away.

### **When can I return to normal if the person who is sick at home is not in one of the priority groups for testing above?**

If you remain well, you should restrict your movements for 14 days from the time they started self-isolating at home. In some instances self-isolation of the sick person at home is not possible. In that case your doctor will give you specific advice.

### **Keeping yourself safe and well**

- 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 - the virus does not travel through phones lines. For more information on minding your mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak go to [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie).
- Although you have been asked to stay at home it is important you keep yourself mobile by getting up and moving around as much as possible. You can go out for walks, runs or cycles but try to avoid contact with others and keep a distance of at least 1 meter (3ft) but where possible 2 meters (6.5 feet) from others.

#### **1. Clean your hands often (wash with soap or gel)**

- Clean your hands regularly - This is one of the most important things you can do.
- Use moisturizer on your hands after washing
- Be careful to do this anytime you have touched the person with COVID-19 or touched anything they have used.

## **2. Don't spend much time with the person awaiting the test results**

- It is best to stay out of the room they are in as much as possible and avoid touching. Try to stay at least 1 meter (3ft) and where possible 2 meters (6.5ft) away from them.
- You can use your phones to talk.

## **3. Make sure that any room you need to share with the person (kitchen, bathroom) is well ventilated**

- Keep windows open as much as you can

## **4. Do not invite visitors into the home**

- Do not invite or allow unnecessary visitors to come into the house.
- If someone urgently needs to come to the house, keep them at least 1 meter (3ft) and where possible 2 meters (6.5ft) away from the person with symptoms of COVID-19.

## **5. Be sure that people who are high risk of severe illness are not near the person with symptoms of COVID-19**

- Don't let anyone who is at high risk of severe disease care for the patient or come close to them. This includes people who live in your home:
  - who have a long-term illness
  - who may have a weak immune system,
  - the very young (infants <1 year),
  - those over 65 years and
  - pregnant women.
- Where possible, you should try to avoid contact with these high risk people too.

## **6. Avoid sharing your household things**

- You should not share food, dishes, drinking glasses, cups, knives, forks and spoons, towels, bedding or other items with the patient until they have been washed.
- The items can be washed in a dishwasher if one is available or with washing up liquid and hot water. You should use household/rubber gloves if available. The gloves can be washed and dried after use. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after removing the gloves
- If the person with symptoms of COVID-19 has used games consoles or remote controls clean them before someone else in the house uses them.

## **7. Toileting and bathing**

- If possible, the person with symptoms of COVID-19 should have their own toilet and bathroom that no one else uses.
- If they can't have their own toilet/bathroom check that the toilet bathroom looks clean and clean your hands after you finish.
- Do not share towels with them.

## 8. Household cleaning

- Clean all surfaces, such as counters, table-tops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets and toilet handles, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables, every day with a cleaning product.
- When cleaning you should use your usual household products, like detergents and bleach as these will be very effective at getting rid of the virus. Follow the instructions on the manufacturers label and check they can be used on the surface you are cleaning.
- If you have them wear household/ rubber gloves when cleaning surfaces or handling dirty laundry. If you use household/rubber gloves they can be washed and dried after use. Always wash your hands after you take off the gloves.
- If you are using re-useable cleaning cloths, these can be washed in a hot wash cycle of a washing machine after use.
- If the gloves and cleaning cloths are disposable place them 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
- You can tumble dry items and iron using a hot setting/ steam iron if required.
- If you have household/rubber gloves you can wear them when handling dirty laundry and hold the items away from your clothing.
- If you don't have gloves wash your hands after handling dirty linen.
- Do not send laundry to a laundrette.

## 10. Managing Rubbish

- Put all personal waste including used tissues and all cleaning waste in a plastic rubbish bag.
- Tie the bag when it is almost full and then place it into a second bin bag and tie.
- Once the bag has been tied securely leave it somewhere safe. The bags should be left for three days before collection by your waste company.
- Other household waste can be disposed of as normal without any time delay.

**If you are caring for someone in your home who has or may have COVID-19**

If possible, only one person should look after the patient. Ideally this would be someone who is not in a risk group for complications of infection.

- If you are caring for someone who is sick with symptoms of COVID-19 try and keep your distance if possible –stay at least 1 meter (3 ft) and where possible 2 meters (6.5ft) away and avoid touching them.
- If this not possible remember to clean your hands afterwards.
- Clean your own hands regularly and if necessary help the person you are caring for to clean their hands also.
- Do not touch your face while caring for someone else.
- If you have to clean phlegm or spit from their face use a clean tissue, put it into a waste bag and wash your hands.
- If the person becomes very unwell especially with difficulty breathing but it is not an emergency, call your regular doctor to ask for advice.
- If it is an emergency, call the emergency services at 112 or 999 and remember to tell them that the person may have or is has been diagnosed with COVID-19.