



## COVID-19

### National Interim Guidelines for a patient undergoing diagnostic testing for COVID-19 in a hospital but who is suitable for home isolation while awaiting test results

*This document summarises interim recommendations for contact management for COVID-19 outside of the healthcare setting. It is the first national guidance issued for COVID-19 on this topic. It has been adapted from Public Health England Guidance and is based on the current knowledge of the situation in Wuhan, China and experiences with SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV.*

*It is intended for use during a high containment phase, when no or limited number of cases have been identified in Ireland. It may change if it becomes necessary to move to a mitigation phase.*

*Readers should not rely solely on the information contained within these guidelines. Guideline information is not intended to be a substitute for advice from other relevant sources including, but not limited to, the advice from a health professional. Clinical judgement and discretion will be required in the interpretation and application of these guidelines.*

*These guidelines are aligned with the principles of Article 3 of the International Health Regulations.*

## I. Background

This guidance is for Public Health teams and hospital clinicians. It covers the advice to give individuals who are awaiting results from diagnostic testing for COVID-19 and who do not require admission to hospital

Isolation of patients awaiting results in their own home must be decided on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the local Public Health Team and the attending clinician(s), following a discussion about the suitability of self-isolation in the home. Above all the care of patients should not be compromised and home isolation should only be considered in those where it is clinically appropriate.

## II. Patient testing

- Testing is currently arranged by receiving hospital with the testing performed in the National Virus Reference Laboratory.
- Transport of the patient to have a sample taken for testing will be via ambulance as per current guidelines unless the patient presents themselves to the ED
- Public Health must be informed immediately of all patients who are considered to need testing for novel Coronavirus.
- Once the attending clinician has assessed the patient and determined they are suitable for discharge on clinical grounds while awaiting results, the clinician must contact their local Public Health team to discuss the appropriateness of this from a public health perspective which requires an assessment of the suitability of the intended accommodation and the likely capacity of the person to adhere to self-isolation requirements.
- **A telephone link with direct access to an appropriate health care provider in the hospital must be established for the full duration of the home care period until the results of testing are received and evaluated.**

## III. Assessment of suitability of the intended accommodation

Public Health will perform a risk assessment over the telephone based on information provided by the patient or relative and any additional information that may be readily available (for example local knowledge circumstances and facilities).

They should:

- Ensure accommodation is suitable. In the case of multiple occupancy dwelling, can the exposure to other residents be minimised during the period of self-isolation.
- Consider whether any other occupants of the same dwelling are particularly vulnerable including chronic illness, immunosuppression, pregnant, infants and those over 65 years.
- Consider if other residents are aware of the potential risks to them related to COVID-19 and are able to consent to accepting those risks. This may be particularly relevant and particularly difficult to establish while respecting patient confidentiality if other residents are not intimate partners or family.
- Ensure that there is a working telephone number for the person being isolated and that they can agree to keep the telephone charged and accessible at all times. If there are other

people in the same residence at least one additional person's phone number should be available and be working.

- Consider if the patient is likely to be able to adhere to the requirements of self-care and self-isolation. For children or those who lack capacity, this may mean confirming that the parent, guardian or carer is capable of following and willing to abide by the requirements and recommendations
- A checklist has been provided in this guidance to support Public Health in their assessment.

#### IV. Discharging the patient

- Once the patient's accommodation and overall circumstances have been assessed as suitable for self-isolation by public health, the attending clinician can arrange for discharge.
- The patient must be given a 24/7 direct access telephone number for and appropriate healthcare provider that they should contact should their condition deteriorate during the period of self-isolation. If the patient has a mobile phone they should be asked to dial the number on that phone before leaving and to save the number on their phone.
- The patient must be given the advice leaflets for them and any other household members enclosed in this document.
- Surgical Facemasks, disposable gloves, plastic aprons (which can be used for cleaning where toilet facilities are shared) and alcohol hand rub should be supplied to the patient. The quantity supplied should be sufficient to cover the period until results are available (results expected to be available within 48 hours). Surgical masks should be provided for use by other members of the household if required. The patient should know who to contact if they run out of supplies before the test result becomes available. .
- Provide the patient with discrete signage that to use at their home should they chose to use it (for example I am not available at present to answer the door, please call back later or telephone).
- Consideration must be given to the transport method home. The overall aim is to ensure others are not exposed to a potentially infectious patient, when the patient travels from the hospital to their home/accommodation
  - Public transport and taxis are not acceptable
  - Walking home is not acceptable
  - If the patient has driven in their own car to the hospital and is assessed as well enough to drive and feels well enough to drive home, this is acceptable.
  - If the patient is accompanied by someone with their own car, Public Health determines that that person has already had significant exposure to the patient and the person is aware of the risks and willing to drive them home, they may arrange to collect the patient from a pre-determined point of collection at the hospital and bring them home. The patient should wear a surgical mask for the duration of the journey. The driver should be provided with a surgical mask and alcohol hand rub.
  - Where the person has travelled to the hospital by car they should be advised that at a minimum high risk surfaces in the car (steering wheel, door handles, dashboard, interior of windows) should be cleaned with a detergent wipe after transport of the patient is completed and that they should then clean their hands with alcohol hand rub or by washing with soap and water.

- If the above transport options are not feasible, the hospital should request an ambulance to take the patient home, informing the ambulance controller that the patient is under investigation for COVID-19 and therefore infection prevention and control measures must be applied.
- If the patient's accommodation is not suitable for self-isolation, arrangements must be made to admit and isolate the patient while laboratory results are awaited, as per current guidelines.

## V. Laboratory results

- The attending hospital clinician must inform the patient and the local Public Health Team as soon as the laboratory results are available.
- **If COVID-19 is detected:**
  - The patient must be transported to a hospital with suitable isolation facilities by ambulance for isolation and further management.
  - Contact tracing must be conducted by Public Health
- **If the COVID-19 is not detected:**
  - The clinician must put in place arrangements for any further treatment as required and the patient must be informed that they no longer need to follow the specific precautions that apply in the context of suspected COVID-19 infection.
  - There are no further Public Health actions

**Checklist to assess whether residential accommodation is suitable for home isolation for individuals undergoing diagnostic testing for COVID-19**

Patient is considered by clinician to be well enough not to require admission to hospital with no significant co-morbidities or care needs	
There are no patient specific factors that are likely to compromise their ability to adhere to self-isolation requirements (for example substance dependence).	
Is the patient able to perform effective hand hygiene	
A working direct telephone link with the healthcare provider has been established for the full duration of the homecare period until the result becomes available.	
At least one working phone number (patient and other member(s) of the household) – check that these are working	
Patient has capacity to understand instructions and advice. For children or those who lack capacity, confirm that the parent, guardian or carer is capable of following and happy to abide by the requirements and recommendations	
Access to secondary care within a reasonable distance by road.	
If multi-occupancy accommodation, do other residents understand and accept the risk and can exposure of other residents be minimised sufficiently?	
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Risk assessment made if occupants of the same dwelling are particularly vulnerable to infection, for example, those with a chronic illness, immunosuppression, pregnant, infants and those over 65 years	
Individual room to sleep in (single occupancy)	
Facilities for hand hygiene – soap and water, disposable paper towels	
Sufficient toileting facilities that the patient can have their own toilet OR it will be feasible that shared facilities can be adequately cleaned as per patient guidance between use.	
Sufficient cutlery, crockery and utensils to avoid sharing with other residents*	
Sufficient facemasks, alcohol hand rub, tissues, kitchen towel, waste disposal bags*	
Sufficient cleaning materials as per patient guidance provided*	
Area in which waste/laundry can be temporarily stored securely	
Support for getting groceries, prescriptions, and other personal needs.	
Written advice provided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact details for designated medical contact provided</li> <li>• Advice for the patient about self-isolation requirements</li> <li>• Advice for other members of the household, if applicable</li> </ul>	
No indications that self-isolation at home is likely to be associated with an unacceptable level of public anxiety or compromise to the patients privacy and safety	

\* enough supplies for 48 hours – as it is anticipated that laboratory test results should be available within this time frame.

## Patient advice sheet – home isolation

Your doctors have agreed that you may stay at home while you wait for the results of tests for infection with COVID-19. This is because you are not so sick that you need to be in hospital and because you have agreed to follow the steps needed to keep you and other people safe.

### 1. Stay at home

Do not go to work, school, religious services or public areas, and do not use public transport or taxis until you have been told that is safe to do so. You will need to ask for help if you need groceries, other shopping or medications.

### 2. Keep away from other people in your home as much as you can \*

You should stay away from other people in your home most of the time in a well-ventilated room with a window to outside that you can open. If you can you should use a toilet and bathroom that no one else in the house uses. If you cannot have your own toilet and bathroom the toilet and bathroom you use needs to be kept clean (see advice below).

### 3. Clean your hands often

Clean your hands often. This is one of the most important things you can do. Do not touch anyone else's face.

### 4. Call ahead before visiting your doctor

If you need a doctor call the number you were given before you travel. They will help you get the help you need in a way that is as safe as possible for everyone else.

### 5. Wear a facemask \*

If you have to go into the **same room with other people** at home or go to see a doctor or clinic clean your hands with the gel and put on one of the face masks you were given.

Anyone in a room with you should also have a mask that they can wear if they want to.

Do not touch the front of the mask when you are removing it. Clean your hands with gel or wash with soap and water after removal of the mask.

You do not need to wear a facemask when there is no one else in the room with you.

### 6. Cover your coughs and sneezes

Cover your mouth and nose with a paper tissue when you cough or sneeze.

If you are caring for someone who is waiting for a test result, use disposable tissues to wipe away any mucus or phlegm after they have sneezed or coughed.

Put the tissues into a plastic waste bag (see note below for managing rubbish), and immediately clean your hands with gel or wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

If you are caring for someone clean your own hands as well as helping the person you are caring for to clean their hands . Do not touch you face while caring for someone else.

### **7. Don't share your stuff**

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding or other items with other people in your home when you have used them (or after your child or the person you are caring for has used them ).

After using these items, wash them thoroughly in a dishwasher if available or with soap and hot water

Laundry, bedding and towels should be placed in a plastic bag and washed once it is known that the tests for novel coronavirus are negative. If this is not possible and you need to wash the laundry see below for further advice on handling laundry.

Don't share games consoles or remote controls. If you cough or sneeze on a screen, wipe the screen clean immediately.

### **8. Check your symptoms (or the person you are caring for, as appropriate)**

Seek help right away if you are getting sicker such as if your breathing is getting difficult or if the person you are caring for is getting more unwell.

If it's not an emergency, you should call the number you were given. If it is an emergency and you need to call an ambulance, tell them that you are being tested for COVID-19 (or that you are caring for someone being tested for COVID-19, as appropriate).

### **9. Do not have visitors in your home**

Do not invite or allow visitors to come into the house. Do not answer the door to callers. You might want to put a sign on the door saying you are not available.

If you feel you have to have someone visit the house call the number you were given first

### **10. Toileting and Bathing**

If possible use a toilet that no one else is using.

If you can't have your own toilet/bathroom clean your hands and wear a mask when you go to the toilet and if you need to bath or shower clean anything you have touched afterwards and leave an hour before anyone else uses the bath or shower

Use different towels from everyone else. It is probably best to keep the towels you use in the room with you and take them with you if you have to leave the room.

**11. Household cleaning**

Many cleaning/disinfectant products available in supermarkets work against coronaviruses.

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 household cleaner.

Follow the instructions on the label and check they can be used on the surface being cleaned.

Wear disposable gloves and a plastic apron when cleaning surfaces, clothing or bedding.

Clean your hand after you take of the gloves and apron

Discard of gloves and cloths in the waste after using.

**12. Laundry**

If you need to wash the laundry at home before you get the test results e then wash all laundry at the highest temperature for the fabric using laundry detergent. This should be above 60°C.

If possible tumble dry and iron using a hot setting/ steam iron.

Wear disposable gloves and a plastic apron when handling soiled materials and clean all surfaces and the area around the washing machine.

Do not take laundry to a laundrette.

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling dirty laundry (remove gloves first if used).

**13. Waste**

Put all the waste and that you have used including tissues, and masks in a plastic rubbish bag. Tie the bag when about three quarters full. The plastic bag should then be placed in a second bin bag and tied.

Treat all cleaning waste in the same way.

Do not put the rubbish bags out for collection until the test result comes back.

**Going back to normal.**

Your doctor will call you with the results of your test. Keep following the steps to keep everyone safe until you are told it is safe to go back to normal.

**Contact Details**

Name and contact number for Public Health	
Name & Contact Number for Hospital	

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Figure 1 Respiratory etiquette

# COVER UP

## COUGHING AND SNEEZING

- 
  - Turn your head away from others
  - Use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth
- 
  - Drop your tissue into a waste bin
- 
  - No tissues? Use your sleeve
- 
  - Clean your hands after discarding tissue using soap and water or alcohol gel for at least 15 seconds



These steps will help prevent the spread of colds, flu and other respiratory infections

Figure 2. How to wash your hands

# How to Handwash?

WASH HANDS WHEN VISIBLY SOILED! OTHERWISE, USE HANDRUB

 Duration of the entire procedure: 40-60 seconds



0 Wet hands with water;



1 Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces;



2 Rub hands palm to palm;



3 Right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa;



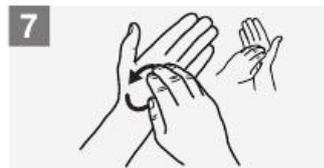
4 Palm to palm with fingers interlaced;



5 Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked;



6 Rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa;



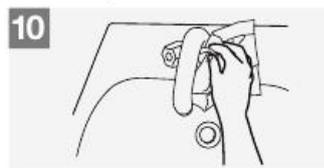
7 Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa;



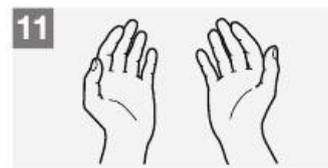
8 Rinse hands with water;



9 Dry hands thoroughly with a single use towel;



10 Use towel to turn off faucet;



11 Your hands are now safe.



World Health Organization

Patient Safety

A World Alliance for Safer Health Care

SAVE LIVES  
Clean Your Hands

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**Advice sheet for people who live in the same home as a person waiting for the result of a test for COVID-19**

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

Clean your hands often with gel or wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Be careful to do this anytime you have touched the person waiting for their result or touched anything they have used. .

**2. Don't spend much time with the person**

It is best to stay out of the room they are in as much as possible and avoid touching. You can use your phones to talk. If they need to use a shared kitchen or toilet ask them to call you so you can go to another room

**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. Wear a facemask if advised to\***

If you have to be in the same space as the other person check that they are wearing a mask. If you have to be within 1 metre/3 feet of them wear a mask.

Don't touch the front of the mask and put it into rubbish bin when you take it off. Then clean your hands.

**5. Do not invite visitors into the home**

Don't let anyone into your home. Do not invite or allow friends or other family to come in.

**6. Be sure that people who are high risk of severe are not near the person**

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 or who may have a weak immune system, the very young (infants <1 year), those over 65 years and pregnant women. {note this should be a part of the public health assessment ]

**7. Avoid sharing household items**

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other things with a person who is waiting for a test result until they have been cleaned thoroughly.

Do not share games consoles, remote controls or telephones.

**8. Toileting and bathing**

If possible, the person waiting for the test result 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 use towels that person waiting for the test has used.

## **9. Household cleaning**

Many cleaning/disinfectant products available in supermarkets work against coronaviruses.

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 household cleaner. Follow the instructions on the label and check they can be used on the surface being cleaned.

Following cleaning, you can use a bleach solution to disinfect surfaces. To make a bleach solution at home, add one tablespoon of household bleach to one litre of water to be used for cleaning.

If you have them, wear disposable gloves and ideally a plastic apron when cleaning surfaces, clothing or bedding. Wash your hands after removing gloves and aprons.

Discard of gloves and cloths in the waste after using.

## **10. Waste**

All waste that has been in contact with the individual, including used tissues, and masks and the waste from household cleaning should be put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied when full. The plastic bag should then be placed in a second bin bag and tied.

Do not dispose of it or put it out for collection until you know that patient does not have COVID-19.

## **11. Laundry**

If you need to wash the laundry at home before the results are available then wash all laundry at the highest temperature for the fabric using laundry detergent. This should be above 60°C. If possible tumble dry and iron using a hot setting/ steam iron.

Wear disposable gloves and a plastic apron when handling soiled materials if possible and clean all surfaces and the area around the washing machine.

Do not take laundry to a laundrette.

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling dirty laundry (remove gloves first if used).