



An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta
agus Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Employment Affairs
and Social Protection

COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Information for Employers
and Employees



Illness Benefit for COVID-19 absences

If you are an employee or self-employed and feel you may have COVID-19, or may need to self-isolate as a result of COVID-19

Phone your GP and self-isolate

In line with public health advice from HSE



Don't Go In Person



If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 or are medically certified to self-isolate by a GP you can apply for Illness Benefit*

*To be eligible for this payment a person must be confined to their home or a medical facility



To get an Illness Benefit form phone us on 1890 800 024



Or get a friend or family member to collect one from your GP or Intreo Centre

Don't Go In Person



Send completed form to DEASP FREEPOST PO Box 1650

Your GP sends a medical cert to the Department



Your payment is processed



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Introduction

The Government has announced a package of measures with the main objective being to limit and slow down the spread of COVID-19, to keep the number of affected people to a minimum and to reduce peak pressure on the health service.

This package included €2.4 billion for income support to fund an enhancement of State illness payments for people affected by COVID-19. The special measures include:

- Eliminating the current 6 day 'waiting period' and bringing forward payment of benefits to cover the first week of any absence in respect of medically required cases of self-isolation or medically diagnosed cases of COVID-19.
- Increasing the personal rate of Illness Benefit from €203 per week to €305 per week for a maximum period of two weeks of medically required self-isolation, or for the duration of a person's medically-certified absence from work due to a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19.
- Changing the normal social insurance conditionality requirements for access to Illness Benefit for employed people including self-employed people and providing access to Supplementary Welfare Allowance, in cases of COVID-19 illness or medically certified self-isolation.

These enhancements to the benefits available to workers suffering from COVID-19 or self-isolating due to COVID-19 reflect the outcome of discussions with key employer and trade union representative bodies. Employer and trade union bodies, jointly with Government have now urged all employers to support national public health objectives by continuing, as a minimum, to pay employees who cannot attend work due to COVID-19 illness or self-isolation the difference between the enhanced Illness Benefit rate and their normal wages.

The purpose of this notice is to outline the social welfare income supports that are available to assist any employees who may be required to take time off work. Information concerning employment rights is available at the Workplace Relations Commission website www.workplacerelements.ie

In considering how to respond to questions arising as a consequence of COVID-19 employers and employees are directed in the first instance to the public health advice issued by the HSE, available on their website www.HSE.ie. It is essential that all individuals and employers abide by this advice.

Who the enhanced arrangements are intended to serve

The enhanced arrangements are intended to reduce the financial loss incurred by workers - employed and self-employed people - who are not adequately covered by occupational sick pay arrangements.

People who

- work in the civil and public sector **do not need** to apply for COVID-19 related illness benefit as separate special leave arrangements have already been made;
- are already in receipt of a welfare payment, including people engaged on state employment programmes such as CE and Tús or engaged in funded training and education programmes, **do not need to apply** - their existing payment will continue to be paid if they are affected by COVID-19.

Workers who are diagnosed with COVID-19

Where an employee or a self-employed person is **medically required** to self-isolate or has been diagnosed with COVID-19 they can apply for the enhanced Illness Benefit payment. In the interests of public health, this payment will only be paid where individuals **remain confined to their home or a medical facility** while in receipt of this enhanced Illness Benefit.

The personal rate of this payment has been increased to €305 as compared with the normal personal rate of €203.

The standard increases payable in respect of adult and child dependents will continue to be paid. Standard payment rates for Illness Benefit are available [here](#).

- Illness Benefit applications can be made by post. Forms are available at Intreo Centres and at GP surgeries or can be ordered by telephone from the Department at 1890 800 024. An online application is being developed and should be available by the end of the month.
- As per the HSE advice, people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should not attend their GP surgery or their Intreo Centre in person and should instead contact their GP by phone or phone 999 or 112.

Workers who are not diagnosed with COVID-19 but who are required to self-isolate

A person who is **medically required** to self-isolate in accordance with the up-to-date guidelines from the HSE may apply for the enhanced Illness Benefit payment. This will be paid for a maximum period of two weeks self-isolation and will only be paid where individuals **remain confined to their home or a medical facility** while in receipt of this enhanced Illness Benefit.

Conditions for COVID-19 Illness Benefit

Remember if you are applying for a COVID-19 Illness Benefit payment you;

- Must have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or must satisfy the conditions for self-isolation specified in public health advice;
- Must be absent from work and confined to home or a treatment location;
- Must not be performing any work;
- Must have been in paid employment immediately prior to claim; and
- Must submit, on request, evidence of employment, earnings and absence from work.

Workers whose employers do not supplement/top-up the State Illness Benefit payment

Workers, in receipt of the enhanced illness benefit payment who still face financial distress because their employer fails to pay sick pay beyond the level paid by the State, can apply for additional emergency income support, in the form of **Supplementary Welfare Allowance (based on a means test)** - details available [here](#).

Applications are usually made in person, normally when a person is no longer confined to their home. People who require immediate support and cannot attend an Intreo Centre can phone 1890 800 024 or 01 248 1398 between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday.

Availability of the enhanced payment

The implementation of these enhancements requires legislation by the Oireachtas and changes to application and payment systems within the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. It is hoped that this process can be completed by the end of March.

The new payment rates will become effective from 9 March and workers will be entitled to a refund of any arrears due from this date.

Workers who are requested to stay at home by their employer

Employers are requested to follow public health advice and should not ask staff to stay away from work except in accordance with this advice. Where employers send staff home in circumstances where they are not advised to do so, it is expected that they will continue to pay staff as normal.

Any worker, who is not advised to self-isolate in accordance with the up-to-date guidelines of the HSE, but is requested to stay at home by their employer as a precaution against the spread of COVID-19 will, in situations where the employer cannot continue to pay their wages, be considered to have been temporarily laid-off and can apply for an income support in the form of a **Jobseeker Payment** or **Supplementary Welfare Allowance**.

Workers who are laid off temporarily or put on short time working

Employees who are laid off temporarily, without pay, due to a reduction in business activity, can apply for a **Jobseeker Payment**. This application can be made online at www.mywelfare.ie or in person at an Intreo centre.

Employees who are put on short-time working by their employer due to a reduction in business activity related to COVID-19 may

apply for a **Short-time Work Support** payment – information on this is available [here](#). This application can be made in person at an Intreo Centre.

Workers who need to take time off work to care for a person affected by COVID-19

Many employers can, and do, agree compassionate leave arrangements with staff who need to take short periods of time off to care for another person. These include arrangements to enable employees to work remotely from home, to alter shift patterns, to work-up time taken, to rearrange parental leave or to bring forward annual leave entitlements from future work periods. Where it is not possible to make appropriate compassionate leave arrangements, employees can call on some statutory entitlements.

- An employee is entitled to paid leave, known as ‘**force majeure leave**’, where they are urgently required to attend to the needs of a person who is affected by an illness or injury, including an actual or probable case of COVID-19. The person to whom care is being provided must be an immediate family relative¹ or a person who is in a relationship of domestic dependency with the employee. It is limited to a total of 3 days in a **12 month** period or 5 days in a 36 month period. In the exceptional circumstances of COVID-19 it is expected that employers will, if at all possible, facilitate people by allowing them to take the full 5 days entitlement in one block, as required.

¹ For the purposes of force majeure an immediate family relative means a child, a spouse, brother, sister, parent or grandparent.

- Parents are entitled, with 6 weeks' notice, to take up to 22 weeks unpaid **parental leave** to care for each child up to 12 years of age (16 years of age in the case of a child with a disability).
- Parents are also entitled, with 6 weeks' notice, to take **parents leave** of 2 weeks for each child under 1 year of age born on or after the 1st November 2019. Parents taking parents leave are eligible to apply for **Parents Benefit** from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. Information on the scheme is available [here](#) and applications can be made online at or www.mywelfare.ie by post.
- Employers are free to waive notice periods for parental/parents leave or to agree to provide paid leave as an alternative to parental/parents leave. Employers can also agree alternative leave/absence arrangements.

People already in receipt of Social Welfare Payments

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection is making the necessary preparations to ensure that there will be no disruption to welfare payments.

People currently in receipt of a welfare payment will continue to receive this payment in accordance with their current entitlements if they are required to self-isolate or are diagnosed with COVID-19. There is no need for the people concerned to take any action.

Payments to people who collect their payments in person at post offices but, due to illness or self-isolation, are unable to do so on the due date, will be held over until they can next attend a post office.

Alternative payment arrangements (e.g. transfer into a bank account, collection by an agent) are also available and can be agreed, on request, with any person who is affected by COVID-19.

How to apply for Illness Benefit for COVID-19 absences

Step 1

If you are an employee or self-employed and feel you may be suffering from a COVID-19 illness or may need to self-isolate you should contact your GP by telephone.

If the GP is satisfied that you have COVID-19 or that, based on public health guidelines, you are a probable source of infection and should self-isolate, they will advise you accordingly.

The GP will then complete a medical certificate on your behalf and send this directly to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. You will need to provide your GP with your name, PPS number and date of birth so that this certificate can be associated with a payment in your name.

Step 2

You now need to complete an application form for Illness Benefit (Form IB 1). There are three ways that you can get an application form/make an application.

By phone

You can call 1890 800 024 or 01 248 1398 between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday to get an application form by post.

Organise to collect paper application form

Ask a friend or family member to pick up an application form for you at:

- your GP's surgery;
- a local Intreo Centre
 - link to Intreo Centres [here](#)

If you have been medically certified to self-isolate or are diagnosed with COVID-19 do not attend your GP or Intreo Centre.

Online

An online application process will be available by the end of March.

Part 5 of the form relates to how you wish to be paid and it is therefore important that you provide us with the relevant details.

You do not need to complete Part 7 of this form (it relates to work related injury).

You should complete the form carefully to ensure a quick and efficient payment. You do not need to stamp the envelope. Send your application form by Freepost to Social Welfare Services, PO Box 1650, Dublin 1.

Step 3

Once both the application form and the medical certificate are received, payment will be processed.

Step 4

You should continue to liaise with your doctor in relation to your diagnosis and the length of time you are medically certified unfit to work because of COVID-19.

Step 5

In order that we can process all payments as quickly as possible, we would kindly ask you not to phone the Department seeking updates on your application as staff will be focusing on processing applications. Thank you for your co-operation.

Finally...

- As the COVID-19 situation evolves, the Department is committed to providing information and updates, and recommends that you check [gov.ie/deasp](https://www.gov.ie/deasp) and the Department's [twitter account](#).
- Comprehensive information on employment rights and social welfare issues is also available on the Citizen's Information Board [website](#). Employment rights information is also available at the Workplace Relations Commission [website](#).
- Please also continue to check the [HSE website](#) for up to date COVID-19 health information.

