

Advice for members and clients

What is Coronavirus?

Coronavirus is a new virus that causes an illness called COVID-19. It affects your lungs and airways. For most people, it causes mild symptoms while for others it can be more serious and require hospital treatment.

The symptoms are:

- a cough
- a high temperature
- shortness of breath.

These symptoms are similar to lots of other illnesses, like common colds and flu. If someone has these symptoms it doesn't necessarily mean they have coronavirus.

The virus can cause pneumonia. In severe cases there can be organ failure. As this is viral pneumonia, antibiotics are of no use so recovery depends on the strength of the immune system.

Those thought to be most at risk are the elderly or those with underlying health conditions such as asthma.

Reducing the risk

One of the most important things you can do to reduce the risk of infection for yourself and the people around you is to **wash your hands**, frequently and thoroughly, with soap and hot water.

You should wash your hands for at least 20 seconds especially when you get home after going out, before eating or handling food, and after sneezing or blowing your nose.

You should also make sure you catch coughs or sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve – not your hands – and put used tissues in the bin. Then wash your hands.

Try to avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

What to do if you are worried

If you are worried that you or someone you look after may be at risk, go to 111.nhs.uk or call NHS 111, letting them know that you are a carer.

Don't go to your GP surgery. This is important as staying at home will reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

Even if you are not showing symptoms, if you provide personal care in a home environment use NHS 111 if you have been in close contact with someone with the virus or if you've been to one or more of the places listed on the NHS website in the last 14 days.

NHS 111 will advise on self-isolating and testing.

Most people can continue to go to work and other public places but if any of the categories above apply to you then you should inform your employer at the earliest opportunity.

Being prepared

If you feel that you may not be able to fulfil your care duties, perhaps because you have been advised to self-isolate, it is recommended that you put a contingency plan in place and, if you can, make cover arrangements with trusted neighbours, friends or family members.

How do I protect someone I care for?

If you have paid care workers, cleaners or other helpers coming into the home of the person you care for:

- ensure that they are following stringent hygiene and infection control measures as set out by the NHS. If they are employed through an agency and you have doubts, contact the agency to ask them about their policy.
- talk to the person you care for about the hygiene and infection control measures they should expect someone coming into their home to follow. They should not be afraid to insist that these are followed.

Useful websites

<https://www.pkc.gov.uk/coronavirus>

<https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/guidance-for-healthcare-providers-healthcare-workers-returning-from-risk-areas-or-who-have-had-contact-with-possible-or-confirmed-cases-of-covid-19/>

<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/looking-after-your-health/coronavirus-covid-19>