

Coronavirus and hygiene measures to keep us all safe

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Hygiene measures are all about stopping the transmission of the virus, making it impossible for it to pass from one person to another, breaking the chain so to speak.

Viruses are spread by 2 means:

- Droplet spread
- Contact with contaminated surfaces

There are three simple actions we must all do to keep on protecting each other

Wash your hands, cover your face, make space. These are the three most effective ways we can control the spread of the virus. This is the advice to the general public and is relevant to us in and out of the workplace. For those of you who travel in and out on public transport there are requirements to social distance and wear face coverings.

What does this mean in the workplace? We are required to demonstrate that our workplaces are Covid secure. Risk assessments should be in place in both clinical and non-clinical environments and updated to reflect changes in guidance.

Social Distancing

Coronavirus is spread when those infected have close, sustained contact with others. Maintain 2 metres social distancing where possible, if this cannot be achieved then we are required to wear personal protective equipment, PPE, the minimum of a face mask and dependent on our work area, gloves, apron, eye protection may also be required alongside other hygiene measures discussed in this document.

Where possible maintain a 2 metre distance, avoid meeting in groups, communal areas, having corridor conversations.

Personal Protective Equipment PPE

From the 15th June all HCWs are required to wear a face mask if they are not able to social distance from others by 2 metres. This rule is the same whether you work in an office environment or in a clinical area. The rule also applies when you are in communal areas such as lifts, corridors, reception areas and the commercial premises we have on site Costa Coffee, Marks & Spencer etc.

The evidence suggests that face coverings can help us protect each other and reduce the spread of the disease from someone who is suffering from coronavirus, but not showing symptoms.

Before putting on and taking off your mask hands should be washed.

A face mask needs to fit properly and cover your nose, mouth and chin completely. It should not have any rips or tears and should be dry. Once your mask is on you should avoid touching your face. Masks when not in use should not be left to dangle around your neck. If a mask is no longer required please dispose of it correctly in the designated bins provided. Masks should be replaced regularly.

Viruses cannot move by themselves. The coronavirus is a tiny glob of genetic material. The virus needs to travel in a carrier. The carrier is a fluid droplet that you expel when you cough, sneeze, talk, laugh and even breathe out. Most of the fluid droplets will be stopped from entering the air if you are wearing a mask. Even if some of the fluid droplets landed on your mask the majority will not pass through. This gives the mask wearer some additional protection too but the main reason to wear a mask is to protect others as it is possible to be infected and not have any symptoms.

The science tells us that Coronavirus, Covid 19, is dose dependant, so the more particles, virus that enters your body the sicker you will become therefore there is real benefit in reducing that volume by wearing a mask and protecting your co- workers, patients and visitors.

Other PPE such a gloves, apron and eye protection are all there to protect you from the virus on your body and your clothes. Please check with your line manager if you are unsure what the correct PPE is for your work area including how often it should be replaced.

The use of face masks, and other PPE does not remove the need to be vigilant with other hygiene measures.

Hand hygiene

Handwashing is extremely powerful at slowing down the spread of the virus. Hands should be washed frequently including before and after wearing a face mask and other PPE and after touching surfaces with our bare hands.

The design of the Coronavirus is like an envelope, inside it is shaped a bit like a tadpole with a sticky tail which makes it very effective at sticking to your hands. It will not wash off by water alone. Hence the need to use soap and spend at least 20 seconds washing your hands, the soap and the friction this action takes will dislodge, dissolve and kill the virus. Alternatively if soap and water are not available, alcohol gel of at least 60% alcohol base (hospital supplies are 60%+) is also successful in killing the virus.

Frequent cleaning/surface decontamination

This virus can live on surfaces longer than 72 hours, 3 days. Hence the requirement for us to adhere to strict hygiene measures of cleaning both clinical and non- clinical areas regularly and more frequently used equipment, furniture and high touch points.

Think of the power of a sneeze. A sneeze can spread microscopic droplets as far as 8 metres and land on surfaces, furniture, objects waiting for someone to come along and touch those things and then touch their eyes mouth and potentially become infected if the person who sneezed was already infected. Washing your hands after sneezing and use of tissues to contain sneezes will also reduce transmission of the virus.

A study found people touched their face an average of 23 times per hour. Nearly 50% of those touches were to their mouth, nose and eyes which are known to be gateways to infection.

We also need to consider other items we touch such as food items, the shared jars of coffee, boxes of tea, litres of milk, they all present a vehicle for the virus to travel by, transfer from one person's hand to another. If we can avoid these items do or if not ensure that you wash your hands before and after every use.

Decluttering/storage

Another way we can halt the spread of this virus is by moving things out of its way so there are less surfaces for it to land on. By moving things out of the work environment that are not being used and putting them into storage we are taking away surfaces for the virus to live on.

Staff storing their personal belongings in lockers or locked drawers, clothes in changing rooms so they are not visible for the virus to land on, to take home to their families or the opposite your clothing, touching others clothing of someone that are unknowingly incubating the virus and passes onto someone else's clothing.

Ventilation

Dependant on the work environment it is not always possible to open windows and doors.

Where this is possible, permitted, increasing the air circulation will reduce the viral load in the air, the dosage and keep the virus on the move, not giving it the opportunity to land, stick on surfaces for us to touch and pick up.

Testing for Coronavirus when you have symptoms

Finally a reminder about symptoms, social distancing, PPE, handwashing, cleaning etc does not remove the need to self isolate if you or a member of your household including children have symptoms of Coronavirus. If you do have 1 or more of the symptoms listed below stay at home and contact your line manager to arrange a test.

Symptoms include:

- **a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)**
- **a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)**
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal**
- **Most people with coronavirus have at least 1 of these symptoms.**

If you live in a household, only the first person that develops symptoms will require testing and not the whole household.

Once referred by your line manager, staff will be contacted within 1 working day to arrange their test and this should be within 2-3 working days.

Testing will not be undertaken on those that have been tested elsewhere and it is not possible to self refer yourself it has to be requested by your line manager.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 however mild, self-isolate for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started rather than from when your test results confirm coronavirus infection.

After 10 days, if you still have a temperature you should continue to self-isolate and seek medical advice. You do not need to self-isolate after 10 days if you only have a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste, as these symptoms can last for several weeks after the infection has gone

If you live with others, all other household members need to stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the household became ill. If anyone else in the household starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for at least 10 days from when their symptoms appear, regardless of what day they are on in their original 14-day isolation period