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Guidance

Advice sheet – home isolation

Updated 31 January 2020

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Your local health protection team and your doctor have agreed that you may stay at home while you wait for the results of tests for COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) infection. This is because you do not need to be admitted to hospital and because you have agreed to follow the important instructions described below.

1. Stay at home

You or the person you are caring for should remain in your home, except for getting medical care (see sections 3 and 8 before getting medical care). Do not go to work, school, 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 require groceries, other shopping or medications. Alternatively, you can order by phone or online. The delivery instruction needs to state that the items are to be left outside, or in the porch, or as appropriate for your home.

2. Separate yourself from other people in your home*

You should stay in a well-ventilated room with a window to outside that can be opened, separate from other people in your home. Keep the door closed. Use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household, if available. If you have to share these facilities, regular cleaning will be required.

If a separate bathroom is not available, consideration should be given to drawing up a bathroom rota for washing or bathing, with the isolated person using the facilities last, before thoroughly cleaning the bathroom themselves (if able or appropriate*). Ensure the isolated person uses separate towels from other household members, both for drying themselves after bathing or showering and for hand hygiene purposes.

If you live in shared accommodation (university halls of residence or similar) with a communal kitchen, bathroom(s) and living area, you should stay in your room with the door closed, only coming out when necessary, wearing a facemask if one has been issued to you.

If you share a kitchen with others (such as university halls of residence or similar), if possible avoid using it whilst others are present. If this is not possible then wear a facemask if you have been issued with one. Take your meals back to your room to eat. Use a dishwasher (if available) to clean and dry your used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them by hand using detergent and warm water and dry them thoroughly, using a separate tea towel.

If these recommendations cannot be implemented, then home isolation should be avoided.

3. Call ahead before visiting your doctor

All medical appointments should be discussed in advance with your designated medical contact, using the number that has been provided to you. This is so the surgery or hospital can take steps to minimise contact with others.

4. Wear a facemask if advised to

If you have been provided with facemasks, then you should wear the mask when you are in the same room with other people and when you visit a healthcare provider. If you cannot wear a facemask, the people who live with you should wear one while they are in the same room with you.

5. Cover your coughs and sneezes

Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you cough or sneeze. Carers of others undergoing testing for 2019-nCoV infection should use disposable tissues to wipe away any mucus or phlegm after they have sneezed or coughed.

Dispose of tissues into a plastic waste bag (see note 10. below for managing rubbish), and immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, rinse and dry thoroughly. Carers should wash their hands as well as helping the person they are caring for following coughing or sneezing

6. Wash your hands

Wash your hands or assist the person you are caring for in washing their hands. This should be done often and thoroughly with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds, rinse and dry thoroughly. The same applies to those caring for anyone that is being tested for SARS-CoV-2. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

7. Avoid sharing household items

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 with soap and water; dishwashers may be used to clean crockery and cutlery.

Laundry, bedding and towels should be placed in a plastic bag and washed once it is known that the tests for SARS-CoV-2 are negative. If this is not possible and you need to wash the laundry see below for further advice on handling laundry.

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

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening, for example, if you have difficulty breathing, or if the person you are caring for symptoms are worsening. If it's not an emergency, you should call your designated medical contact point using the number that has been provided to you.

If it is an emergency and you need to call an ambulance, inform the call handler or operator that you are being tested for SARS-CoV-2 (or that you are caring for someone being tested for SARS-CoV-2, as appropriate).

9. Do not have visitors in your home

Only those who live in your home should be allowed to stay. Do not invite or allow visitors to enter. If you think there is an essential need for someone to visit, then discuss it with your designated medical contact first. If it is urgent to speak to someone who is not a member of your household, do this over the phone.

10. Waste

All waste that has been in contact with the individual, including used tissues, and masks if used, 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 novel coronavirus. Should the individual test positive, you will be instructed what to do with the waste.