**OVERVIEW - Symptoms etc.**

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It's caused by a virus called coronavirus.

**Symptoms of coronavirus**

It can take up to 14 days for symptoms of coronavirus to appear.

The main symptoms to look out for are:

* [a cough](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/cough.html) - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
* shortness of breath
* breathing difficulties
* [fever (high temperature)](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/high-temperature.html) or chills

Other symptoms are fatigue, headaches, sore throat, aches and pains.

The National Public Health Emergency Team has advised anyone who has symptoms to [self-isolate](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/self-isolation-and-limited-social-interaction.html) for 14 days.

If you have any of the most common symptoms and have [been to a place where there is spread of coronavirus, read this advice](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/advice-for-people-returning-from-affected-areas.html).

**Compare symptoms of coronavirus and flu**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Symptoms** | Coronavirus  Symptoms range from mild to severe | Flu  Abrupt onset of symptoms | Cold  Gradual onset of symptoms |
| **Fever or chills** | Common | Common | Rare |
| **Cough** | Common (Usually dry) | Common (Usually dry) | Mild |
| **Fatigue** | Sometimes | Common | Sometimes |
| **Aches and pains** | Sometimes | Common | Common |
| **Sore throat** | Sometimes | Sometimes | Common |
| **Headaches** | Sometimes | Common | Rare |
| **Shortness of breath** | Sometimes | No | No |
| **Runny or Stuffy Nose** | Rare | Sometimes | Common |
| **Diarrhoea** | Rare | Sometimes in children | No |
| **Sneezing** | No | No | Common |

**When you need to call a GP**

For most people who have these symptoms now, it is more likely to be an infection that is not coronavirus.

But if you have symptoms of coronavirus, you need to [self-isolate](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/self-isolation-and-limited-social-interaction.html) and phone your GP. Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. The GP will assess you over the phone. If they think you need to be tested for coronavirus, they will arrange a test.

**Close contact**

This is only a guide but close contact can mean:

* spending more than 15 minutes face-to-face contact within 2 metres of an infected person
* living in the same house or shared accommodation as an infected person

Anyone with [symptoms of coronavirus](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html#Symptoms) who has been in close contact with a confirmed case in the last 14 days should:

* isolate themselves from other people - this means going into a different, well-ventilated room alone, with a phone
* phone their GP, or emergency department

[Self-isolation and self-quarantine](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/self-isolation-and-limited-social-interaction.html)

**When you may need to be tested for coronavirus**

If you have symptoms of coronavirus, you need to [self-isolate](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/self-isolation-and-limited-social-interaction.html) and phone your GP. Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. The GP will assess you over the phone. If they think you need to be tested for coronavirus, they will arrange a test.

[Read this advice if you’ve been to a place with spread of coronavirus](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/advice-for-people-returning-from-affected-areas.html).

**Risk of catching coronavirus in Ireland**

There are [confirmed cases](https://www.gov.ie/en/news/7e0924-latest-updates-on-covid-19-coronavirus/) of COVID-19 (coronavirus) in Ireland.

The risk of catching coronavirus in Ireland is still low to moderate. This may change.

Follow the [advice on how to protect yourself and others from coronavirus](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/protect-yourself.html).

If you have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus, a public health doctor will tell you this.

**How coronavirus is spread**

Coronavirus is spread in sneeze or cough droplets.

You could get the virus if you:

* come into close contact with someone who has the virus and is coughing or sneezing
* touch surfaces that someone who has the virus has coughed or sneezed on

As it's a new illness, we do not know how easily the virus spreads from person to person. Spread is most likely from those who have symptoms.

The virus may only survive a few hours if someone who has it coughs or sneezes on a surface. Simple household disinfectants can kill the virus on surfaces. Clean the surface first and then use a disinfectant.

[Follow this advice to protect yourself and others from coronavirus.](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/protect-yourself.html)

**Packages from affected countries**

You cannot get coronavirus from packages or food that has come from China or elsewhere.

There's no evidence that animals or animal products legally imported into the EU are a health risk due to coronavirus.

**Children and coronavirus**

Follow this [advice if your child has recently travelled to a place with a spread of coronavirus](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/advice-for-people-returning-from-affected-areas.html).

Encourage your child to [wash their hands](https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html) regularly and properly.

Read more advice on [how to prevent your child from catching or spreading viral infections](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/child-health/colds-coughs-and-viral-infections-in-children.html).

**Treatment for coronavirus**

There is no specific treatment for coronavirus. But many of the symptoms of the virus can be treated.

Supportive treatments, like oxygen therapy, can be given while your own body fights the virus. Life support can be used in extreme cases.

If you get the virus, your healthcare professional will advise treatment based on your symptoms.

Antibiotics do not work against coronavirus or any viruses. They only work against bacterial infections.

**Vaccine**

There is currently no vaccine to treat or protect against coronavirus.

The flu vaccine does not protect against coronavirus.

**At-risk groups and coronavirus**

We do not know for sure which groups are most at risk of complications if they catch coronavirus.

It is likely you are more at risk if you catch coronavirus and you:

* are 60 years of age and over
* have a long-term medical condition – for example, heart disease, lung disease, high blood pressure, diabetes or cancer
* [are pregnant](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-pregnancy.html)

You should follow the [advice on how to protect yourself and others from coronavirus](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/protect-yourself.html) and other infections like flu.

If you have respiratory symptoms, do not attend your pharmacy in person.  Phone your pharmacist if you need to order a prescription.  Ask a family member to collect any medicines you need.

**Medicines**

There is no need to order more medicines than you need. This will affect the supply of medicines to others.  There is no disruption to the supply of medicines.

**Pets and coronavirus**

There is no evidence that pets such as cats and dogs can catch or spread coronavirus.

**Travel advice**

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) advice is to avoid all non-essential travel to [China](https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/a-z-list-of-countries/china/), [Iran](https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/a-z-list-of-countries/iran/) and [Spain (including the Balearic and Canary Islands)](https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/a-z-list-of-countries/spain/).

The DFA is now also advising people to:

* think carefully before deciding to travel to any other country in the European Union
* not travel to [Italy](https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/a-z-list-of-countries/italy/) at all

If you do visit one of these places, you will need to [self-quarantine](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/self-isolation-and-limited-social-interaction.html#limit-social-interactions) when you return to Ireland.

Get up-to-date travel information from the [Department of Foreign Affairs on countries and regions affected by coronavirus](https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/coronavirus/).

**Travel to areas with widespread local transmission**

If you travel to an area with widespread local transmission of coronavirus, the risk of catching the virus is high. The World Health Organisation (WHO) [publish daily information on rates of local transmission](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/" \t "_blank).

**Interpreting service for deaf people**

Deaf people can contact HSELive using [Irish Remote Interpreting Service](https://slis.ie/iris/" \l "remote-interpreting-iris" \t "_blank) (IRIS).

IRIS is available from 9am to 7pm, Monday to Friday and 10am to 4pm on Saturday.

To access the service using Irish Sign Language, [book an appointment](https://slis.ie/iris/" \l "book-an-appointment" \t "_blank)or email [hselive@hse.ie](mailto:hselive@hse.ie).