

From 15th of June: Visits to residential care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic

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The information in this leaflet is for people who are visiting people who live in residential care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic from 15 June 2020.

Anybody can catch infection with COVID-19. Many people, especially young and generally healthy people, may have a very mild illness or may not notice any symptoms at all. Even if you have a very mild infection you can still spread the virus to others and they may get very sick. Older people and people who already have health problems are at the highest risk of getting very seriously ill if they catch COVID-19 infection. Since COVID-19 started we have seen how quickly this infection can spread and how much harm it can do if it gets into a residential care facility. Being able to visit is very important for you. Being able to see visitors is very important for residents. Making visiting safe is important for everyone.

If you are visiting someone in a long-term care residential facility there are some simple steps you can take to help keep everyone well. **You should not visit if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 infection or have symptoms of any other infection. You should not visit if you have been told you are COVID-19 contact.** There may be times when visiting is now allowed. The staff have to make sure that visits do not affect overall resident care or interfere with infection control procedures.

How Coronavirus is spread

It is important to know how the virus that causes COVID-19 is spread. Coronavirus (COVID-19) is spread by droplets from the nose and mouth when you talk, laugh, cough or sneeze. You could get the virus if you:

- come into [close contact](#) with someone who is shedding the virus
- touch surfaces that someone who has the virus has coughed or sneezed on and then bring your unwashed hands to your face (eyes, nose or mouth)

Before you visit

The National Public Health Emergency Team has advised that each resident has a maximum of two named visitors. Only one of those visitors can be present at any one time.

Check in advance that it is OK to visit. Generally, only one visitor can come to visit someone at a time. Only a small number of visitors can be in the residential care facility at a time. You can expect that you will be given a time slot for your visit and that you will have to come and leave at the agreed times.

Do not visit if you or any member of your household has symptoms of a cold or flu such as fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath. Do not visit if you have symptoms of gastroenteritis such as diarrhoea & vomiting. Do not visit until at least 2 days after your symptoms have gone away. If you are tested for COVID do not visit until you are told it is safe to do so.



Visit [HSE.ie](https://www.hse.ie) for updated factual information advice, or call **1850 24 1850**



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Do not visit if you or any member of your household has been told that you are a contact of someone with COVID. In this case you should wait until the 14 days of self-isolation have passed before visiting.

If you are visiting someone who has COVID-19 infection, a member of staff will tell you what you need to do to keep as safe as possible. If you visit someone who has COVID-19 there is a risk that you can catch infection even if you are careful.

Wearing a face covering or mask

You may be asked to wear a face covering or you may choose to wear a face covering when you go to visit. However if you can keep 2 metres away from the person you are visiting (and from everyone else) then you may not need to wear a face covering or mask all the time during the visit. Even if you do wear a face covering or a mask you should still do all the other things that are important to stop spread of the virus. These include:

- keep a safe distance [social distancing](#)
- washing or cleaning your hands properly and often
- not touching your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

Use of a face covering or mask is recommended if you are within two metres of someone in an indoor place. This is intended to reduce the chance that you may spread the virus to someone else if you are shedding the virus but don't know about it because you have no symptoms. Remember you should not visit if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 infection or have symptoms of any other infection. Wearing a face covering does not make it OK to visit if you have symptoms of infection.

You can get further information on wearing a face covering on [HSE.ie](#)

You should perform hand hygiene before you enter the residents' areas and when you are leaving. Hand hygiene and using a tissue or your elbow when sneezing or coughing and binning your tissue are still very important in reducing the spread of COVID-19.

Wearing gloves or aprons

The virus does not pass through healthy skin. It is important to clean your hands either by washing or using alcohol-based hand rub. Try not to touch your mouth or face.

Do not wear disposable gloves instead of washing your hands. The virus gets on them in the same way it gets on your hands. Also, your hands can get contaminated when you take them off.

In general, you should not generally wear gloves or a plastic apron but sometimes you might be asked to by a member of staff to do. Only wear gloves or an apron when you have been asked to do so by staff.

Bringing items

It is OK to bring a gift or other things the person needs when you visit.

If there is an outbreak of COVID-19 or another Infection in a Residential Facility

If there is an outbreak visiting will stop for some time but there will be exceptions in special situations for example if someone is coming to the end of their life. If there is an outbreak and there are special circumstances you should check with the residential care facility.