

Advice on Coronavirus (COVID-19) if you have had cancer

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus. We are still learning how it works. This is an evolving situation and this advice is based on current information.

If you are concerned about symptoms of coronavirus (cough, shortness of breath, breathing difficulties, high temperature, loss of or change to your sense of taste or smell), phone your doctor.

There are some groups of people who may be more at risk of serious illness, including cancer patients who are on treatment which weakens their immune system, if they catch coronavirus.

The risk of serious illness also increases with age or if you have a long term health condition, such as heart disease or lung disease.

Reduce your risk

- Wash your hands properly and often with soap and water or alcohol hand rub.
- Cover your cough with a tissue, dispose of the tissue, and wash your hands.
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surface.
- Avoid close contact with people - keep 1-2 metres (6.5 feet) between you and others
- Wear face coverings in public places such as, shops, and on public transport. The law requires everyone to wear a face covering on public transport. For advice see - <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/face-masks-disposable-gloves.html>
- Follow national advice on limiting the number of people you come in contact with, either in your own home or outside.
- Avoid all crowded places, especially indoors but including parks and public amenities
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.
- Do not share objects that touch your mouth – for example, bottles, cups.
- Do not shake hands.

Everyone has been asked to **avoid unessential travel overseas** and to distance themselves from one another to slow the spread of the virus. This is called **social distancing**. This means keeping a space of ideally 1-2 metres (6.5 feet) between you and other people. Do not shake hands or make close contact if possible. This applies to you and your family also.

You and your family/carers should take extra care to protect yourself from coronavirus. If you are at higher risk of serious illness from coronavirus and have been advised to cocoon follow the **extra steps** below.

Extra Steps

Cocooning is a term for staying mostly inside one's own home and limiting face-to-face contact with others. This is for personal protection of the most vulnerable and reduces the chances of coming into contact with someone who has the virus. It is not recommended for everyone who has or has had a diagnosis of cancer.

Further information on cocooning is available on the [HSE website www.hse.ie/coronavirus](http://www.hse.ie/coronavirus)

Cocooning is recommended for

- Everyone aged 70 and over
- People of any age who are extremely medically vulnerable: those who may be at risk of serious illness because they already have a serious lung disease or their immune system is significantly weakened.

Everyone wants you to keep well. So take people up on offers of help. And remind them of the steps you need to follow. Share this guide with them to help explain.

It can be difficult for people who are living with cancer or who have had cancer in the past. For advice see "[Help to cope with coronavirus worry when you're living with cancer](#)"

Together 4 Cancer Concern is a new support service set up by Cancer Care West, the Irish Cancer Society and the National Cancer Control Programme. If you are struggling with the emotional and psychological effects of living with cancer during this very challenging and uncertain time, contact the service through the Irish Cancer Society's Support line on **Freephone 1800 200 700**.

Community cancer support centres are continuing to provide services to cancer patients and their families. Contact a centre local to you for advice and support.

Stay up to date, check the www.hse.ie - [HSE coronavirus page](#)

Last updated 27/10/2020 please see www.hse.ie/coronavirus