

Advice on Coronavirus (COVID-19) for volunteers who work with people with 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.

There are some groups of people who may be more at risk of serious illness if they catch coronavirus. The risk increases with age and if you have a chronic illness.

You should not volunteer with cancer patients if:

- You have any symptoms of possible coronavirus, such as cough, shortness of breath, fever, change or loss of your sense of taste or smell (phone your GP)
- In the last 14 days, you have been in contact with someone with coronavirus. You will need to restrict your movements until the 14 days are up.
- You have been to any country outside the island of Ireland in the last 14 days. You will need to restrict your movements until the 14 days are up.

This advice is particularly important for volunteers working with cancer patients currently on treatment, as they may be at higher risk of severe illness.

Follow these steps to protect yourself from coronavirus and to slow the spread of the virus:

- Wash your hands properly and often with soap and water or alcohol hand rub.
- Cover your cough with a tissue, dispose of the tissue, 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 indoor areas where it is difficult to maintain a distance, such as shops, and always 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
- Avoid contact with anyone who is ill with a cough or difficulty breathing
- Avoid unessential travel; follow travel advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs
- 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

Protecting the person you are caring for

The most important steps you can take are those above. Reducing your own risk of getting the virus will reduce your chances of passing it on to someone else. Follow this advice as strictly as possible and encourage others to follow this advice too.

Extra steps are needed to protect those currently on cancer treatment, over 70 years of age or with a chronic health condition such as heart disease or lung disease. It is really important to reduce their chances of coming into contact with someone with coronavirus.

Do

- ✓ Coordinate with others to limit the number of visitors
- ✓ Wash your hands properly and often
- ✓ Keep a space of at least 1-2 metres (6.5 feet) between you
- ✓ Wear a face covering if it is difficult to keep 1-2 metres distance between you
- ✓ Refill their prescription medications and check they have over-the-counter medicines and supplies, for example, tissues and a thermometer
- ✓ Think of different ways that you can offer support, such as by phone or dropping off groceries

Don't

- ✗ No visitors to your home or garden
- ✗ Do not shake hands
- ✗ Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- ✗ **Do not volunteer to help if you have any symptoms of coronavirus or you have been asked to restrict your movements for 14 days**

It can be a difficult time for people living with cancer. For advice see "[Help to cope with coronavirus worry when you're living with cancer](#)"

Together 4 Cancer Concern can help 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 **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](#)