

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidelines

The Coronavirus is a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. The current Coronavirus strain (COVID-19) we are experiencing is a new strain of the virus, which as we are seeing has the ability for rapid transference between hosts.

To support you in ensuring your office and employees are protected we have summarised the information available to support the normal functioning of your business.

COVID-19 Symptoms

The most common symptoms of the virus are fever, tiredness and a dry cough. Some patients may have additional symptoms including unusual aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhoea.

These symptoms are incredibly similar to more common cold strains, and only individuals suffering from a fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical advice.

80% of individuals will recover from the disease without needing special treatment, however 1 out of 6 people who contract the virus may become seriously ill and develop difficulty breathing. The most likely groups are the elderly, immunocompromised individuals and those with underlying medical conditions, including high blood pressure, heart problems and diabetes.

Preventing Spread of the Virus

The virus can spread from person to person through small droplets of moisture released from the nose or mouth when an infected individual coughs or exhales. These droplets can also survive on surfaces and can transfer to individuals in that manner.

It is unlikely that a person would catch the virus from an individual who is carrying the virus but expressing no symptoms, or one who is experiencing mild symptoms.

Protecting Yourself

Stay aware of the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak, available through the World Health Organisation website, as well as national and local public health authorities.

There have been confirmed cases of the virus in circa 40 countries, primarily in Asia. The UK has had 15 confirmed cases of the virus.

Basic protective measures include:

- Washing hands frequently
- Maintaining social distance from anyone coughing or sneezing, recommended 1 metre
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth following touching shared surfaces

The virus can survive on surfaces for hours, if not days, so surfaces must be kept clean with approved anti-bacterial products.

Protecting your Business

Self-Quarantine and Payments

www.greenburn.co.uk

The World Health Organisation has recommended a 14-day self-quarantine for any individuals that have recently visited areas identified with the virus.

For employees travelling on holiday or for work, if they are visiting a country that has identified the virus in an active spreading state, they must not return to work prior to discussing this with their employer.

Employers are strongly recommended to implement a business-wide policy for the time being. This would restrict employees from returning to work following any travel abroad for 14-days. If an employee is adamant about returning to work, the employer can consider paid suspension under health and safety grounds.

These days would be counted from the date the employee returned to the UK. The employee should self-quarantine to ensure that if they have (a) contracted the virus or (b) are carrying the virus, the risk of infection is lowered prior to their return to work.

This quarantine period, if it is caused due to work-related travel, is to be paid at the employees' normal rate, and where possible the employee should arrange to work from home.

However, if the employee has chosen to self-isolate without informing their employer, had to self-isolate following advice from a medical expert, had to go into quarantine *or* cannot return to the UK, there is no statutory right to pay.

However, to prevent employees attempting to come back to work sooner than is safe, it is recommended that employers consider providing pay for employees who have to self-isolate or who have been quarantined for medical reasons (for up to 2 weeks which is the recommended isolation period).

International Travel

For an employee who must travel for work during this period, it is strongly recommended that they purchase a **N95 Mask** as this has been identified as being strongly protective against the virus, especially in high density areas such as airports and aeroplanes.

If you cannot obtain a N95 Mask, then you are recommended to use a standard medical mask, although these are not as effective due to the nature of the virus. As the supply of medical masks is under stress at this time, all individuals should avoid unnecessary waste of these resources.

In-house Increased Hygiene

During this period, it is recommended that employers introduce stricter hygiene in-house including:

- Anti-bacterial wipes for surfaces
- Anti-bacterial hand gel available
- A stringent daily clean of all door handles, light switches and any surface that has multiple person contact

The virus can survive on surfaces for hours, if not days, so surfaces must be kept clean with approved anti-bacterial products.

Further Information

This information is provided for protective measures and not intended to be used to create situations of panic.

Further information on the virus can be found here: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>