

# COVID-19 Health & Safety FAQ – England

## Contents

<b>General</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Social distancing</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Clinically extremely vulnerable, clinically vulnerable and vulnerable people (non-clinical)</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Buildings and contractors</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PPE / face masks, hygiene and handwashing</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Homeworking and display screen equipment</b>	<b>11</b>

## General

### Questions

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What is the difference between COVID-19 and coronavirus?

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What is COVID-19?

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Can my business stay open?

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What provisions should I make available to my employees to reduce the risk of infection?

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### Advice

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- A virus is an infectious agent that can only replicate within a host organism.
  - Coronaviruses exist in animals and have recently made the jump to humans.
  - COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) is a respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus.
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- COVID-19 is a disease believed to spread largely through respiratory droplets from coughing and sneezing, and it seems to spread easily. It may also be possible to become infected by touching a contaminated surface or object and then touching one's nose or mouth. It is recommended that employees should:
    - Stay home if they have respiratory symptoms (coughing, sneezing, shortness of breath) and/or a temperature above 100.4 F and have lost their sense of taste and smell.
    - Leave work if they develop these symptoms while at the workplace.
    - Shield coughs and sneezes with a tissue, elbow, or shoulder (not bare hands).
    - Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
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There are no longer restrictions in place for businesses to remain closed during the pandemic.

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- As handwashing is one of the most effective defences, employers must make sure that employees have ready access to washing facilities and that these facilities are kept well stocked with soap and (ideally) paper towels. There is some evidence that paper towel drying reduces the risk of spreading viruses compared to jet dryers.
  - Alcohol-based hand sanitisers and sanitising wipes should be distributed throughout the workplace.
  - All frequently-touched surfaces, such as workstations, countertops and doorknobs, should be routinely disinfected.
  - Increased cleaning of common areas using standard cleaning agents can also reduce the risk of spreading this respiratory disease.
  - Try to provide as much social distancing around employees and other people as possible.
  - Review the latest guidance on the government's Public Health England website.
  - Complete a thorough detailed risk assessment and ensure control measures are in place throughout the workplace. Example [Risk Assessment Templates](#) can be found on our Coronavirus Advice Hub.
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What are my duties under health and safety law for COVID-19?

- Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, employers have a duty to do everything that is “reasonably practicable” to safeguard their employees and those affected by their operations. A failure to do so may result in criminal liability.
- Furthermore, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require you to compile a suitable and sufficient risk assessment covering risks to employees who are at work, as well as risks to non-employees arising from your operations, and to make and give effect to appropriate arrangements for planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review.
- If you employ five or more staff, these arrangements must be recorded in writing.
- COVID-19 is a hazard that employees may be exposed to during their work activities, hence it is something that must be assessed, and reasonably practicable control measures must be introduced. The starting point is to conduct a risk assessment.
- Our Coronavirus Advice Hub contains a number of sector-specific **Risk Assessment Templates**, which can be adapted to your own environment and practices.
- The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2020 will need to be adhered to.

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What should I do if a member of staff tests positive for COVID-19?

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Please refer to the **Emergency Action Plan** available on our Coronavirus Advice Hub, which can be downloaded and adopted. This can also be amended in line with your specific business activities.

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If someone contracts COVID-19 in the workplace, do I need to report this under RIDDOR?

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You are only required to make a report under RIDDOR (The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) in relation to COVID-19 when:

- An unintended incident at work has led to someone’s possible or actual exposure to COVID-19. This must be reported as a dangerous occurrence.
- A worker has been diagnosed as having COVID-19 and there is reasonable evidence that it was caused by exposure at work. This must be reported as a case of disease.
- A worker dies as a result of occupational exposure to COVID-19.

If this occurs, we strongly recommend contacting us to discuss. Further information can be found on [the Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\) website](#).

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When should we exclude workers from the workspace?

- Employees should stay home, or go home, if they have symptoms of COVID-19 and should self-isolate.
- Employees who have been contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate should also adhere to this.
- Employees who have been told to self-isolate via the app should do so.

Please be aware that there is likely to be potential changes to this in the coming months when new rules are brought in place for double-vaccinated people.

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Are our employees adequately trained?

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All employees should have ready access to appropriate information (such as on infection control and company policies and risk assessments) and should know who to contact within the organisation to report exposures. Managers have a key role to play in implementing and maintaining your arrangements.

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Should we revise our policies around international and domestic business travel?

How should we be communicating with employees?

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Do we need to update our current Health & Safety Policy to include COVID-19?

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Is there any other health and safety documentation I need to complete while my business remains open?

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What is the R0 value?

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Please refer to [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) for up-to-date travel advice.

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- It is imperative for organisations to be able to reach all workers, including those not at the worksite, with regular, internally-coordinated, factual updates about infection control and symptoms, as well as company policy regarding remote working and circumstances in which employees might be excluded from or allowed to return to the workplace.
  - These communications should be carefully coordinated to avoid inconsistent policies being communicated by different managers or functions. Clearly this requires organisations to maintain current phone/text and email contact information for all employees and test organisation-wide communication periodically.
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- We recommend creating a separate COVID-19 Policy to describe the measures you have put in place to protect your employees and others not in your employment from the risks of the virus and the duties that fall upon you.
  - Your current Health & Safety Policy will be reviewed in the coming year and further changes will be made.
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- We recommend having the following documentation in place as a minimum (these can all be downloaded from our Coronavirus Advice Hub and made company-specific):
    - **Emergency Action Plan** – to outline what to do in the event of someone showing symptoms.
    - **Daily Cleaning Checklist** – to ensure that all hand-contact points and surfaces are disinfected on a regular basis to stop the spread of infection.
    - **Contractor Checklists** – to check contractors prior to their arrival and ensure control measures are in place for any activity they need to complete.
    - **‘Staying COVID-19 Secure’ Notice.**
    - **Workplace signage** – including handwashing, symptom reminders and site instructions.
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In epidemiology, the reproductive value describes the average number of people an infected individual can expect to pass a virus onto. It is therefore a measure of how transmissible, or contagious, a disease is.

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## Social distancing

### Questions

Why is social distancing so important?

What are the recommended social distancing guidelines?

We are a pharmacy and are not able to implement the social distancing rules. What should we do?

We have members of staff car sharing who cannot maintain a social distancing. What should they do?

A member of staff has worked with others who have recently been confirmed as having COVID-19. Should they be sent home?

Can we deliver leaflets to households within the town on how to get information/support during COVID-19?

### Advice

Keeping social distances is important to ensure you do not come into contact with an air droplet containing COVID-19.

- The current recommendation is for a distance of two metres to be maintained between any two persons who are not from the same household as much as possible. Restrictions have been lifted; however, we should continue to take a cautious approach.
- Where maintaining a distance of two metres is not possible, this can be reduced to a distance of ‘one metre +’.
- One metre + means that the distance can be reduced to one metre provided other controls are in place, such as:
  - Side-to-side to back-to-back working;
  - Good hygiene; and/or
  - Use of PPE.

Pharmacies must follow their own specific guidance on social distancing and PPE during the COVID-19 pandemic, which can be found on the [Public Health England](#) website.

- Specific guidance can be found on the [Public Health England](#) website.
- Ideally staff should travel in their own vehicle, where practically possible, and avoid lift sharing.
- Where people from different households are sharing a private vehicle (car, taxi, minibus, lorries), consideration should be given to how physical (social) distancing can be applied within the vehicle, where possible. If they can adhere to physical (social) distancing whilst travelling, they should do so. Where this is not possible, and they are travelling with a non-household member, the number of passengers should be limited and spaced out as much as possible.
- You should follow the guidance in the Ellis Whittam **Emergency Action Plan** on how to deal with a positive case and who to contact.
- You should clean and disinfect any surfaces that the unwell person has had significant contact with, such as worktops that they may have sneezed on or areas of floor where they have vomited.
- Closing the premises to do a “deep clean” should not be necessary if your employees are following the recommended handwashing and hygiene precautions.

Providing you have adapted the **Risk Assessment Template** on our Coronavirus Advice Hub and ensure good hygiene and social distancing then yes, you can.

Is social distancing required for outdoor work?

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Yes, social distancing methods should always be in place in any setting.

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## Clinically extremely vulnerable, clinically vulnerable and vulnerable people (non-clinical)

### Questions

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What is a vulnerable person and how does this differ from a clinically vulnerable person and clinically extremely vulnerable person?

### Advice

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- Vulnerable people are those who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19. These individuals must be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures. Guidance on vulnerable groups can be found on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.
  - Clinically extremely vulnerable people are those, including children, who are at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 due to an underlying health condition. These include people receiving chemotherapy, renal dialysis patients and hard organ donor recipients.
  - Clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable persons can be permitted to work but social distancing measures should be stringent and further control measures may be required to safely accommodate them. An individual assessment of these persons should be made.
  - Vulnerable people (non-clinical) includes children at risk of violence, children with special educational needs (SEN), victims of domestic abuse and rough sleepers. This group is advised to follow all general guidelines and controls, as far as is possible. Where these people fall into one of the other vulnerable groups, the appropriate guidelines should also be followed.
  - If in doubt, a medical professional should be contacted to provide clarification.
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## Buildings and contractors

### Questions

Should statutory inspections (e.g. LOLER, machinery, LEV, etc.) continue during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Can we prevent insurance inspectors from inspecting equipment using COVID-19 social distancing as a reason for non-inspection?

How can I easily keep track of what is due and when so that I know what equipment is in date for maintenance and thorough examination?

If I am struggling to get my usual maintenance/insurance inspection companies to visit site, can I keep using my equipment as I am unable to obtain these services?

What constitutes reasonable attempts? Can I try one other service provider?

What should I do if I cannot arrange a thorough examination?

All fire doors are being propped open with fire extinguishers and door wedges to avoid hand contact with doors and handles. Should insurers be made aware of this / could the insurance be deemed invalid?

Subcontractors have always supplied their own tools/PPE/RPE and van. During these unusual times, would this still be the case if we sent them to a contract? Would we have to supply wipes/gel, etc. or not? These items

### Advice

Yes, these should continue. The legislation regulating these has not been suspended.

No. You will need to ensure social distancing is maintained and that good hygiene practices are adhered to by insurance inspectors and staff; however, you should not use COVID-19 as a reason to stop engineers from visiting.

We would recommend that you use our [SafetyNest software](#) and in particular the Audit, Registry and Monitoring apps to allow for forward planning and ensure items are in date.

No, you must make reasonable attempts to source engineers from other providers. You should document what steps you have taken in order to demonstrate to enforcement authorities that you have made reasonable attempts.

No, you must make as many reasonable attempts as is reasonably practicable. If you have exhausted all of your avenues, then you are more likely to be in a favourable position than trying one other alternative provider.

You should take advice from your competent person/inspection body and take a risk-based approach in order to decide whether you can safely use the equipment. If you cannot, you must take it out of operation. If you have decided that you can safely use the equipment – based on a suitable and sufficient risk assessment (with any additional measures required to reduce the risk) and advice obtained – then you must ensure that you document the steps that have been taken as evidence for enforcing authorities.

Fire doors should not be propped open. Regular disinfection and handwashing will be enough in most circumstances to reduce the risk of spreading the virus in these areas.

Subcontractors should provide their own equipment.

are so hard to get hold of immediately and this may cause issues.

Will we be vulnerable to prosecution if a statutory check is not completed due to contractors who are no longer doing site visits?

- You should do everything that is practicable to ensure a contractor visits.
- Equipment that is not safe should not be used.

## PPE / face masks, hygiene and handwashing

### Questions

Do employees need to wear a face mask or face coverings to work?

Why do I see medical professionals wearing face visors and face masks on the news?

What is the difference between an FFP3, FFP2 and fluid-resistant (type IIR) surgical mask?

When are FFP3 and FFP2 masks to be worn?

Do FFP2 and FFP3 masks need to be face-fitted?

Do fluid-resistant (type IIR) surgical masks (FRSM) need to be face-fitted?

Why recommend fluid-resistant (type IIR) surgical masks (FRSM) when FFP2 and FFP3 masks are safer?

How do I know what PPE to use?

### Advice

Please refer to the [Post-Lockdown FAQ](#) on our Coronavirus Advice Hub.

- The mask is there to stop them breathing in the virus.
- In medical settings, the virus is known to enter via the nose and eyes, therefore face visors are worn.
- Disposable clothing is worn to stop the virus being spread via their clothes.
- FFP stands for filtering face piece.
- The 2 and 3 are short for class 2 and 3.
- FFP3 respirators filter at least 99% of airborne particles.
- FFP2 respirators filter at least 94% of airborne particles and offer protection against COVID-19.
- Fluid-resistant (type IIR) surgical masks (FRSM) provide barrier protection against respiratory droplets reaching the mucosa of the mouth and nose.

FFP3 and FFP2 masks are to be used when completing Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGP). Guidance on this can be found on the [GOV.UK](#) website.

Yes, FFP2 and FFP3 will need to be fitted in line with the manufacturer's instructions to ensure they have a tight fitting around the user's nose and mouth.

No, these masks do not need to be face-fitted.

There is no evidence that respirators add value over FRSMs for droplet protection when both are used with recommended wider PPE measures in clinical care, except in the context of AGPs.

Tabulated guidance can be found on the [GOV.UK](#) website.

Do we need to provide face coverings?

- No, however face coverings can help us to protect each other and reduce the spread of the disease if you are suffering from coronavirus but not showing symptoms. Wearing a face covering is an added precaution that may have some benefit in reducing the likelihood that a person with the infection passes it on.
- People who use public transport or visit shops should consider covering their mouth and nose. Face coverings may be beneficial in places where it is hard to maintain social distancing.
- Face coverings are not a replacement for social distancing, ventilation and regular handwashing, which remain the most important actions.

Could I potentially give COVID-19 to farm animals / dogs or should I just keep washing hands regularly and maintain good hygiene?

- Good personal hygiene should always be followed when handling any animal.
- Do not touch your face without washing your hands first in any scenario, including touching animals.

Should I be using hand-held thermal scanners to test employees?

Organisations can check temperatures using hand-held thermal scanners and consider excluding staff or visitors with temperatures over 100.4 F. However, temperature is not an exceptionally accurate way to assess risk as it is possible that some will be contagious but have no fever. Others will have higher temperatures not related to this virus. Thus, an elevated temperature in combination with respiratory symptoms is the best indicator of possible infection.

Do staff in customer-facing roles need to wear a face covering or just ensure two-metre distancing?

This will depend on the workplace and screens are recommended as a suitable control measure

Do we have to provide masks for our employees?

This will depend on the workplace and the controls within your risk assessment.

I have received a parcel in the post. Do I need to wash my hands after opening the package in case it is contaminated?

Yes, handwashing should occur after opening a package from outside the workplace.

What about keyboards for shared computers? Should we be buying covers for each person to use/take with them or just have antibacterial wipes at each station? What about toilets? Do we need to use disposable plastic covers on the locks, etc.?

- There are quite a few options you can use. You could ensure people clean their hands with hand sanitiser before using shared computers, or people can use their own plastic covers or antibacterial wipes for each station after use – either would suffice.
- We advise that 'hot desking' is avoided and that individuals are assigned their own computer equipment and workstation, where possible.
- For toilets, just ensure people wash their hands after using the toilet and that toilets are regularly cleaned.

Should all people wash their hands on arrival? If so, should we have a basin full of soapy water and get them to immerse for 30 seconds, or is the antibacterial rinse/hand sanitiser sufficient?

60% alcohol or more based hand sanitisers are sufficient, but you should encourage regular handwashing where possible.

Should all pupils have their temperatures checked?

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The current guidance does not state that this is required, but parents should ensure their child is fit and healthy for school before they attend.

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Should our cleaners wear overalls which are washed on site, or is that unnecessary because the care/teaching staff be wearing their normal clothes?

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This is unnecessary; however, it is to be ensured that when they are cleaning, staff do not touch their face.

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Should staff bring in their own mugs, or anything else? Or should we just get the mugs put through the dishwasher each evening?

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- People can bring in their own mugs as long as they are not carriers of COVID-19. If there is a suspected case within their household, they are to stay home and not to come into the premises.
  - If you choose to use mugs provided by yourselves, then yes, these would need to go through the dishwasher each evening. Clean hands after handling mugs.
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Should all staff wash their hands on arrival, or is the antibacterial rinse/hand sanitiser sufficient? If okay to use an antibacterial rinse/hand sanitiser? Is there a specific one that is best, or ones to avoid?

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Staff can use the antibacterial rinse / hand sanitiser – this is to be alcohol-based and must contain at least 60% alcohol. But please encourage frequent handwashing within the premises for a minimum of 20 seconds.

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Can we use wipes instead of spray disinfectant?

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Check with the manufacturer of the wipes to ensure they remove COVID-19 from a surface.

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## Homeworking and display screen equipment

### Questions

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How do we ensure the safety of those working from home?

### Advice

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- Our advice is that you undertake a general risk assessment for homeworkers as this will help to identify and address any hazards and provide cover for your organisation. A template can be found on our Coronavirus Advice Hub.
  - For further guidance, please see the [Homeworking and Health & Safety FAQ](#) and [Homeworking and Employment Law Guide](#) available on our Coronavirus Advice Hub.
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