

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT THE ASSURED GROUP OF COMPANIES

Infectious Diseases Policy

Introduction

The Company attaches the greatest importance to the health, safety and welfare of its customers, employees, workers, contractors, subcontractors and others who may be affected by its work activities.

The following policy explains how the Company will control and manage the risks of any infectious diseases in the workplace. It also gives specific guidance on the condition commonly known as Coronavirus and officially known as COVID-19, which has been designated as a global emergency by the World Health Organization.

The government provides constantly updated advise on where and how people can continue to go to work, school and other public places, if they are able.

People need to stay away from public places (self-isolate) if they test positive for COVID-19 or are advised to by the 111 online coronavirus service (see below) or a medical professional.

As with all Health and Safety matters, responsibility is a joint one, with the Assured Group of Companies, its managers, employees workers, subcontractors and contractors all co-operating and playing their part to prevent the spread of the virus as far as is reasonably practical and to manage it effectively.

Infectious Diseases

In order to restrict and reduce the risk of infectious diseases in the workplace, the Company:

- has systems in place that assess the risks of and prevents, detects and controls the risk of infection
- has a designated lead for infection prevention and control – namely the Group Health & Safety Manager
- ensures that sufficient resources are available to secure effective prevention and control of infection
- ensures employees, contractors and other persons who directly or indirectly provide work are provided with suitable information, instruction, training and supervision in the precautions to follow
- will ensure that information is obtained from and shared with its customers and other businesses, as necessary
- where there is supposed risk, ensures a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is carried out with respect to prevention and control of infection
- ensures an appropriate standard of cleanliness and hygiene is maintained throughout its own premises and that the premises are maintained in good physical repair and condition
- ensures appropriate standards of cleanliness and hygiene are maintained in relation to equipment
- ensures that a suitable cleaning schedule is in place and followed
- ensures suitable information on infections is provided to visitors, including the importance of hand washing
- ensures information regarding infection is passed on to any other person, as necessary
- ensures individuals who develop an infection are identified promptly and that they receive the appropriate treatment and care

- will inform the local health protection unit of any outbreaks or serious incidents relating to infection.

Procedure

The Company will apply the following procedure to control the risk of infectious diseases in the workplace:

- encourage employees, workers, contractors, subcontractors to report symptoms of infectious diseases
- ensure those who have infectious disease symptoms do not come to work and, in the case of diarrhoea and vomiting, they stay away for at least 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped
- where required, ensure notifiable outbreaks are reported to the relevant authority e.g. the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- co-operate with any investigation by relevant authorities and comply with any investigation findings
- keep the number of personnel dealing with affected persons to a minimum and not allow any such personnel to be involved with food handling
- prioritise cleaning, paying particular attention to the cleaning and disinfecting of toilets, handles, support handrails, taps and wash basins
- ensure that employees, workers, contractors, subcontractors and all relevant personnel, pay strict attention to infection control procedures, in particular to the thorough washing of hands and the wearing of protective clothing if required
- inform customers / visitors of the outbreak and discourage unnecessary visits
- receive and follow external advice, if necessary.

The COVID-19 Virus

Prevention and Preparation

COVID-19 is the illness caused by a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan city, China.

Generally, coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people and those with long term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

The causes of infection of the COVID-19 virus seem to be similar to that of seasonal influenza, i.e. via droplets that are expelled by speaking, sneezing or coughing.

Therefore to reduce the risk of catching or spreading the virus, everyone should:

- use the facilities and equipment provided at any place of work, such as antibacterial soap, cleaning materials, etc.
- avoid close contact with people who show influenza-like symptoms
- always carry tissues - catching the germs in a tissue could help limit the spread of the virus
- cover their mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, using a tissue and wear a face covering where appropriate

- throw the tissue away quickly and carefully
- avoid touching their mouth and nose;
- clean hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds each time, or cleanse them with an alcohol-based hand rub on a regular basis (especially if touching the mouth and nose, or surfaces that are potentially contaminated);
- clean hard surfaces (like door handles and remote controls) frequently with an antibacterial or normal cleaning product
- improve airflow in their living or working space by opening windows;
- practise good health habits including adequate sleep, eating healthily, and keeping physically active.
- in case they need to contact the authorities, locate and know their NHS number (this will be detailed on any NHS letters or prescriptions)
- keep up to date with the latest help and advice available through radio, TV and the internet – see the ‘Further Information’ Section below.

Diagnosis

Symptoms of COVID-19 can be similar to those of common colds and flu, however the most typical symptoms are:

- a new, continuous cough
- high temperature (37.8 degrees Celsius or above)
- loss of sense of taste and smell.

Anyone who lives in England and displays two or more such symptoms, should in the first instance check the NHS 111 online service at <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>. This is a coronavirus service which will advise if medical help is needed, and can give appropriate advice.

This service should be used if:

- anyone thinks they might have coronavirus
- if they have recently been to a country or area with a high risk of coronavirus – see below for travellers information
- they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus.

Anyone should contact their doctor directly rather than using the Coronavirus Service if:

- they have a serious underlying illness
- they are pregnant
- they have a sick child under one year old
- their condition suddenly gets much worse
- their condition is still getting worse after 7 days (5 for a child)

February 2022 Announcement of Changes to Government Guidance and the Company Response

Effective 24 February 2021, the English government published its' plan for living with COVID-19, stating that that the virus will continue to be a feature of everyone's lives for the foreseeable future.

This means that whilst legal requirements are changing, we all still need to be mindful of managing the risk to ourselves and others, not least because it's still possible to catch and spread the virus, even for those who are fully vaccinated.

As a business the Assured Group of Companies remains dedicated to minimising the risk of infection as much as is practically possible. To that end, it will maintain mask wearing, social distancing and all measures that are in place, as appropriate at each company and customer site.

The Company will therefore continue to work to the latest Government guidance and reminds everyone that they have a duty to report any health condition, not just Covid-19, which could affect their work or that of anyone they come into contact with, be it on Company or Customer sites .

Failure to report an incident of infectious disease would be considered to be a serious breach of Health & Safety policy / procedure. As such it would be treated accordingly by the business, resulting in termination of working arrangements or disciplinary action as deemed appropriate.

For the latest Covid-19 guidance across all the countries of the United Kingdom, please refer to the government website: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> and select the appropriate location for specific guidelines and updates.

Travelling Abroad

For any travel outside the United Kingdom, you should:

- Check foreign travel advice for all countries you will visit or travel through:
<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
- Arrange any COVID-19 tests you will need to enter the countries that you will travel to.
- Find out how you can use the NHS COVID Pass to prove your vaccination status abroad:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-covid-pass>
- Check what you will need to do when you return to England:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-to-england-from-another-country-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Use of face masks / Coverings

The use of face masks and other PPE to be worn, whether at work or not, will depend upon the circumstances. Your line manager will therefore advise you as appropriate. The government website should also be consulted, as it is being constantly updated with new developments and industry specific guidance.

There may be some situations when it would be advisable for a worker to wear a mask / covering. Such a situation will depend on the nature of the work, where it is to be carried out, taking into consideration:

- whether workers may come into close contact (typically about a metre) with symptomatic members of the public during the course of their work;
- the duration and frequency of contact with members of the public.

If they feel that a mask may be necessary, contact the Group Health and Safety Manager, who will carry out a risk assessment. If masks or any other type of PPE is required, the Company will provide them as necessary.

Social Distancing

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce social interaction between people to limit the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Everyone should try to adhere to the following measures as much as is practicable:

1. Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), as described above.
2. If using public transport ideally wear a mask to minimise risk of infection.
3. Adhere fully to any local lockdown guidance advised by the government, whether local or national.
4. Ensure that any gatherings with friends and family are fully compliant with current government guidelines.
5. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media wherever practical.
6. Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services.

The Company strongly advises all personnel to follow the above measures as much as possible and to limit face-to-face interaction with friends and family, particularly if anyone:

- is over 70
- has an underlying health condition
- is pregnant

Social Distancing in the Workplace

Employees and Workers

Where personnel are in their offices or onsite, they must follow Company or Customer site rules, including washing their hands with soap and water often and for at least 20 seconds (or using hand sanitiser gel if soap and water is not available).

At all times, up until 1 April 2022, personnel should follow the latest guidance on self-isolation if they or anyone in their household shows symptoms – see the latest NHS guidance here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>

Managers

As a general principle, each manager must continue to identify work areas where barrier gestures cannot be respected (for example in confined, cramped spaces) and implement corrective measures and where necessary additional equipment and PPE.

‘Barrier gestures’ are the measures workplaces and individuals can take to reduce the risk of infection. These include regular hand washing, coughing and sneezing into one’s elbow.

If there is a high concentration of personnel in a work space, managers need to create a work schedule to ensure that employees are prevented from crossing each other in common areas (changing rooms, break room) and from converging at a single point at the same time, for example at:

- The start of shifts
- Lunch, smoking and comfort breaks
- The ending of shifts

It may therefore be necessary to plan shift flows and the predefined locations to be used.

Managers must continue to report suspected and actual cases of COVID-19 to the Company immediately, and also carry out on-site risk assessments to establish if the person concerned has been in close contact with any other personnel.

For specific work environments, please contact the Group Health & Safety Manager for Risk Assessments, Methods of Work and PPE recommendations.

Sickness Absence

Sickness Absence Reporting

If employees are working, then they should report sickness absence as usual, by following the Company’s Sickness Absence procedure and notifying their line manager ASAP, explaining the nature of the sickness.

When Sickness Ends

Once an operator is fit to return to work, they will notify their line manager / Assured contact who will advise if they can return to work as normal (if the site/s they normally work at are open for business).

Sickness Absence Pay

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) and any usual contractual rights to pay will apply from day 4 of illness, unless the absence is related to COVID-19. Where this is the case, SSP may be payable from Day 1 of the absence, until 31 March 2022, when this entitlement is being withdrawn by the government.

Self-Isolation

Anyone who displays symptoms of Coronavirus infection (COVID-19), however mild, should still self-isolate for at least 5 days and follow NHS guidelines referred to above.

If someone is a contact with a positive case, they will not need to self-isolate, but should take a lateral flow test each day for at least 5 days.

Track & Trace

The Company encourages everyone to download the government's track and trace App to their mobile telephone and to use this to register their whereabouts where ever track and trace QR posters are displayed, otherwise to manually record their details as requested by the establishment they are visiting.

Anyone who is notified via the government's 'Track and Trace' system that they are at risk, must also self-isolate as instructed, as well as notifying the Company.

COVID-19 Testing

A virus test is used to check if individuals currently have coronavirus. This involves a swab sample being taken. A swab is a small piece of soft, absorbent material on a plastic stick that is used to take a sample from the nose and throat.

Types of virus test

There are 2 main types of virus test:

- polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests check for the genetic material (RNA) of the virus in the sample. These are sent for processing at a laboratory for the result. This is the type that NHS 111 uses.
- lateral flow antigen tests (LFDs) detect proteins called 'antigens' produced by the virus. These can be administered on the spot and give immediate or quick results.

If anyone displays Coronavirus symptoms, or has been in contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19, until 1 April 2022, they must self-isolate immediately and take a lateral flow test or book a PCR test via the government website, at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>. Failure to comply with this requirement would be regarded as a breach of health & safety procedures and dealt with as detailed earlier in this policy.

The Company will ask for proof (screenshot of text or forward of email) of the results of any such test.

Company Testing

Where employees, subcontractors or visitors are requested to take a COVID-19 test at any Assured or Customer site or to self-test, either on the basis of management instruction, customer request or government guidelines, they are expected to comply. Any such tests will generally be a Lateral Flow type.

As such individuals would be expected to undertake COVID-19 tests at during the course of their work, as and when requested to do so. Refusal to consent to and undertake such tests without good reason would be considered to be a breach of health & safety procedures, and would therefore result in action being taken in accordance with the Company's Disciplinary Procedure (for employees or workers) or termination of their service agreement (for subcontractors). If required, they will be asked to sign a consent form.

With regards to Data Protection regulations, the handling of test results is regarded as confidential, except for the purposes of communicating positive results and necessary follow-up actions, such as self-isolation, etc., across the Company, to ensure the health & safety of all Company and customer personnel.

Regular Covid-19 Testing

To locate your nearest lateral flow testing site, please check online, here: <https://www.gov.uk/find-covid-19-lateral-flow-test-site>

Alternatively, you can collect free tests from local pharmacies or else order tests, or they can be posted to your home free of charge – please follow this link to find out more: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

Assured Group Ltd strongly recommends that all those currently attending Company or Customer sites in the course of their work follows these guidelines. This is seen as a proactive step towards slowing the spread of the virus across the United Kingdom.

Vaccination against Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The NHS websites states that “The coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines are safe and effective. They give you the best protection against COVID-19.”

Who can get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Anyone aged 12 or over in the United Kingdom can now get vaccinated.

How to get your COVID-19 vaccine

Government advise is that 12 – 18 year olds require one dose and that 19 years plus need 2 doses of the vaccine, to get the best protection from the virus. You usually have the 2nd dose 8 to 12 weeks after the 1st one.

Most people have already been contacted by their doctor to arrange their vaccinations. If you have not yet received your first vaccination, you can:

- [book your COVID-19 vaccination appointments online](#) for an appointment at a vaccination centre or pharmacy
- wait to be contacted by your GP surgery and book your appointments with them

If you cannot book appointments online, you can call 119 free of charge. You can also speak to a translator if you need to.

Types of COVID-19 vaccine

The COVID-19 vaccines currently approved for use in the UK are:

- Moderna vaccine
- Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine
- Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine
- Janssen vaccine (available later this year)

You cannot usually choose which vaccine you have. When you book, you'll only be offered appointments for vaccines that are suitable for you.

Most people can have any of the COVID-19 vaccines, but some people are only offered certain vaccines.

How well do the COVID-19 vaccines work?

Anyone who gets COVID-19 can become seriously ill or have long-term effects ([long COVID](#)). The NHS website states that COVID-19 vaccines are the best way to protect yourself and others.

Research has shown the vaccines help:

- reduce your risk of getting seriously ill or dying from COVID-19
- reduce your risk of catching or spreading COVID-19
- protect against COVID-19 variants

The 1st dose should give you some protection from 3 or 4 weeks after you've had it. But you need 2 doses for stronger and longer-lasting protection.

There is a chance you might still get or spread COVID-19 even if you have a vaccine, so it's important to continue to follow all [social distancing guidance](#).

Information:

[Watch an NHS YouTube video explaining what's in the COVID-19 vaccines and how they work](#)

Side effects and safety

The NHS website states that COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in the UK have met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness.

They can cause some side effects, but not everyone gets them.

Any side effects are usually mild and should not last longer than a week, such as:

- a sore arm from the injection
- feeling tired
- a headache
- feeling achy
- feeling or being sick

More serious side effects, such as allergic reactions or blood clotting, are very rare.

If you are pregnant, or think you might be pregnant, you should speak to your healthcare professional before booking a vaccine appointment.

[Find out more about COVID-19 vaccines side effects and safety, here](#)

[For the full NHS guidance on Covid-19 vaccinations, please click here.](#)

NHS COVID Pass

In England, the NHS COVID Pass is no longer a requirement to get entry into designated venues and events. It may however still be a requirement for travelling abroad, so always check the entry requirements for the country you are visiting.

To get a pass you will need to:

- Wait 2 weeks until after you have had 2 doses of the Moderna, AstraZeneca or Pfizer vaccine, or 1 dose of the Janssen vaccine.
- Have a negative PCR test or rapid lateral flow test within the past 48 hours

Managers

In the first instance if any employee, worker, subcontractor or contractor is displaying flu-like symptoms, they should take a lateral flow test. If they test positive, they must notify their line manager immediately.

Any manager who is directly notified by customers, employees, workers, contractors, subcontractors that they are absent with confirmed COVID-19, must immediately notify the Human Resources Manager, having provided the following:

- Their name
- Their usual work location
- The date their symptoms started
- Proof of a positive result

The HR department will then check and confirm their entitlement to statutory or company sick pay and the latest guidance for self-isolation.

- Subcontractors may return to work once the appropriate period of self-isolate is completed.

Managers should then immediately inform the members of their department/team and where necessary customers, giving brief details to the team who work in the immediate area, ensuring they respect the individual's confidentiality as much as is reasonably practicable. The brief need be no more than to say that an employee / subcontractor (etc.,) is off sick with Coronavirus, and that everyone is reminded that they should ensure that they follow personal hygiene protocols such as washing hands with soap, thoroughly for at least 20 seconds, and disposing of tissues correctly.

If employees or workers have a specific health queries or concerns then they should raise them with the Human Resources department in confidence so that advice or further support, such as Occupational Health can be sought if necessary.

Human Resources

For members of the HR department, if they are directly notified by anyone that they are absent with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 then they should be provided with the following details:

- Their name.
- Their usual work location.
- The date their symptoms started on.
- Whether they have taken a COVID-19 test.
- Explain that the normal Sickness Absence Procedure will apply, i.e. that they will have to obtain a Self-Isolation note or Self-Certify on their return to work for days 1-7 of their absence. If absent for

- longer than this, they must then provide a Fitness to Work Note from a medical practitioner. On their return to work, A 'Return to Work interview would then be conducted with their Line Manager.
- Report all instances to the Group Health and Safety Manager.

Health & Safety

The Group Health & Safety Manager holds the organisational responsibility for practical Health and Safety issues such as purchasing appropriate protective equipment and carrying out risk assessments.

Where an instance or suspected instance of COVID-19 is reported, the department will be responsible for carrying out or delegating a risk assessment of the situation, designed to safeguard the health and safety of the individual affected and also mitigate the risks of infecting further personnel. A Risk Assessment will be completed accordingly and any measures detailed in the assessment acted on accordingly.

Further Information

For the latest Covid-19 guidance across all the countries of the United Kingdom, please refer to the government website: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> and select the appropriate location for specific guidelines and updates.

If you have any questions or need further information about any health, safety and environmental issue, please contact the Group Health& Safety Manager or Human Resources Department.

The latest public health information with regard to Coronavirus can be found on the following websites:

National Health Service (NHS):

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

World Health Organisation (WHO):

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

HSE Ireland:

https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html?gclid=Cj0KCQiAs67yBRC7ARIsAF49CdWLZaOnSCwoSFmPiB6i24nLbYPvlxSnRKNfLpzvzXIKElaAqKbEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds

Related Policies, Procedures and Resources

Please refer as appropriate to:

- Health & Safety Policy
- Sickness Absence Policy