COVID-19 information sheet for hospital inpatients

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COVID-19 VACCINE
Public Health Advice

Dear patient

While you are in hospital, the hospital staff will work with you to do everything they can to protect you from catching COVID-19 or any other infection. We would also like to ask you to help us to protect you, other patients, and staff from becoming infected with COVID-19.

The most important step to protect you and others from COVID-19 at home or in hospital is to get vaccinated (primary vaccine and booster). The vaccine reduces your chance of getting infected. The vaccine takes time to work. It is really important to complete the full course of vaccination to get the most benefit. Remember, although the vaccine is very good it does not work perfectly for everyone. People who do catch infection after they have completed vaccination usually do not get as sick as unvaccinated people.

The virus that causes this infection can get into the hospital in any person. It can enter the hospital with a patient, a staff member or a visitor. It is very hard to know for sure if someone does not have COVID-19 because the person who has the infection may not have any symptoms. The tests for the virus are good but they are not perfect. Sometimes a person has an infection but it does not always show up on the test. This means that any other patient or staff member could have the infection at any time and so could you. Most staff and patients are vaccinated and this will help to keep you safer.

When a person in the hospital has infection, the virus can infect both patients and hospital staff. We understand that it is worrying for you. We want you to know that we are doing everything practical to encourage people to get vaccinated. We continue to test people who have symptoms or who may have been in contact with an infected patient. This helps us know who has an infection as quickly as possible and to provide them with extra care measures so as to protect them and to protect everyone else.

Some of the things that we do to protect you:

- You may be asked if you have been vaccinated.

- You may be offered vaccination.

- You may be asked many times if you have any new symptoms of COVID-19.

- If you have symptoms you may be offered testing many times to check if you have COVID-19. The test needs a sample from your nose and/or throat.

- Please agree to have a nose swab even though you have had it many times before and we understand that this may be uncomfortable for you.

- We take extra precautions with people who we think might have infection.

You can help us keep everyone safe when you are in hospital

- It is good to move around a bit but please do not go into the room or bed-space of other patients or stop to chat with other patients.

- Don't share items with other patients; this includes newspapers, food, headphones etc.

- Clean your hands regularly with the hand gel on the ward.

- Wear a mask when you are outside of your room or away from your bed-space. If you feel more comfortable wearing a mask all the time please let staff know and they will give you a mask to wear.

- If at any time you feel unwell or get a cough, or if you feel you are getting more short of breath or there is a change in your sense of taste or smell please tell a nurse or a doctor.

- It's OK to remind staff to clean their hands or to tell a staff member if you see anything that is not clean

If you have had a positive COVID-19 test in the past 7 days and have been discharged home from hospital you must self-isolate* for 7 days from the day your symptoms started or from the date of the positive result. You can stop self-isolating once symptoms have substantially or fully resolved for the final 2 days (48 hours) of the self-isolation period. You should continue to follow the public health protective measures until day 10:

- wear an FFP2 mask or medical grade face mask (surgical mask) in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces and where you are in close contact with other people
- limit close contact with other people outside your household, especially in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces (excluding childcare and educational settings)
- avoid contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19
- work from home unless it is essential to attend in person
- follow all public health protective measures.

If you have been told you have had contact with COVID-19 while in hospital and have been discharged home you will need to be vigilant for symptoms. If symptoms develop you should self-isolate and contact your GP for further advice. A free COVID-19 test can be arranged for you if your doctor thinks you need it.

* Self-isolation means you should isolate yourself from other people in your home. Restricting your movements means you should stay at home; you can go outside to exercise as long as you keep 2m from other people. Further information is on hse.ie

Phone your GP for further advice if you get shortness of breath, a cough, a temperature, (or any other COVID-19 symptoms) or become unwell. A COVID-19 test can be arranged for you if your doctor thinks you need it.

Further information

You can get further information on COVID-19 at www.hse.ie/coronavirus and information on hand hygiene at www.hse.ie/handhygiene

Please talk to any of our staff at any time if you have any questions or concerns during your time at your hospital.