



## Protecting Your Employees

The best thing your employees can do to protect against coronavirus (COVID-19) is:

- Wash their hands properly and regularly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
- Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue or their sleeve when they cough and sneeze
- Put used tissues into a bin and wash their hands
- Do not touch their eyes, nose or mouth if their hands are not clean
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

Following on from a meeting in the Department it was confirmed that employers are NOT required to provide employees with face masks or protected gloves. The Department has gone so far as to suggest that **employers should refuse** to allow workers to wear face masks and protective gloves as this diverts a limited resource away from care givers in the health sector.

### **Workers who are not diagnosed with COVID-19 but who self-isolate**

A person who is medically required to self-isolate in accordance with the up-to-date guidelines from the HSE may apply for the special Illness Benefit payment.

This will be paid for a maximum period of two weeks self-isolation.

### **Workers who are diagnosed with COVID-19**

Where an employee or a self-employed person is medically required to self-isolate or has been diagnosed with Covid-19, they can apply for the special, enhanced Illness Benefit payment. . In the interests of public health, this payment will only be paid where people remain confined to their home or a medical facility while in receipt of this special Illness Benefit. To be eligible for this payment a person must be confined to their home or a medical facility.

The personal rate of this payment has been increased to €305 as compared with the normal personal rate of €203.

The standard increases payable in respect of adult and child dependents will continue to be paid. Standard payment rates for Illness Benefit are available [here](#).

Illness Benefit applications can be made via post. Forms are available at [Intreo Centres](#) and at GP surgeries or can be ordered by telephone at 1890 800 024. An online application is being developed and should be available by the end of March.

As per the HSE advice, people with suspected or confirmed Covid-19 should not attend their GP surgery or their Intreo centre in person and should instead contact their GP by phone or phone 999 or 112.

### **[Find out more about Illness Benefit here](#)**

#### **Workers who are requested to stay at home by their employer (COVID-19)**

Employers are requested to follow public health advice and should not ask staff to stay away from work except in accordance with this advice.

Where employers send staff home in circumstances where they are not advised to do so, it is expected that they will continue to pay staff as normal.

Any person who is not advised to self-isolate in accordance with the up-to-date guidelines of the HSE, but is requested to stay at home by their employer as a precaution against the spread of Covid-19 will, in situations where the employer cannot continue to pay their wages, be considered to have been temporarily laid-off and can apply for an income support in the form of a [Jobseeker's Payment](#) or [Supplementary Welfare Allowance](#).

#### **Workers who need to take time off work to care for a person affected by COVID-19 (Coronavirus)**

Many employers can, and do, agree compassionate leave arrangements with staff who need to take short periods of time off to care for another person.

These include arrangements to enable employees to work remotely from home, to alter shift-patterns, to work-up time taken, to rearrange parental leave or to bring forward annual leave entitlements from future work-periods.

Where it is not possible to make appropriate compassionate leave arrangements, employees can call on some statutory entitlements.

An employee is entitled to paid leave, known as 'force majeure leave' to provide urgent care for an immediate family relative such as a child, spouse, brother, sister, parent or grandparent. It is also available to a partner who is living with the employee. Force majeure is limited to a total of three days in a 12 month period or five days in a 36 month period. In the exceptional circumstances of Covid-19 it is expected that employers will, if at all possible, facilitate people by allowing them to take the full 5 days entitlement in one block, as required.

Parents are entitled, with 6 weeks' notice, to take up to 22 weeks unpaid parental leave to care for each child up to 12 years of age (16 years of age in the case of a child with a disability).

Parents are also entitled, with 6 weeks' notice, to take parents leave of 2 weeks for each child under 1 year of age born on or after 1 November 2019. Parents taking parents leave are eligible to apply for Parent's Benefit from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. Applications can be made online at [www.mywelfare.ie](http://www.mywelfare.ie) or by post.

Employers are free to waive notice periods for parental/parents leave or to agree to provide paid leave as an alternative to parental/parents leave. Employers can also agree alternative leave/absence arrangements.

