



STAYING WELL

ADVICE AND
INFORMATION

FOR ASTHMA
AND COPD PATIENTS

DURING
CORONAVIRUS

Stay at home, wash your hands, don't touch your face.

ASTHMA AND COPD ADVICELINE

1800 83 21 46

1800 44 54 64

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It is caused by a new virus known as a coronavirus. Specialists are still learning each day how it works.

You are more at risk of serious illness if you catch coronavirus and you are over 60 years of age. Those most at risk include over 75's and those with a long-term medical conditions:

- Chronic lung disease (including asthma and COPD)
- Chronic heart disease
- Diabetes
- Smokers
- Immunosuppressed (weakened immune system)
- Cancer
- Cerebrovascular disease (strokes, aneurysms)
- Chronic renal (kidney) disease
- Chronic liver disease
- High blood pressure
- Pregnant women are also in an increased risk category

FAQS: COVID-19, ASTHMA, AND COPD

1. Am I more at risk of contracting coronavirus because of my asthma or COPD?

The HSE has advised that it does not believe that those in 'vulnerable' or 'high-risk' groups have a higher risk of contracting coronavirus. But, as indicated in answer one above, you may, unfortunately, be at higher risk of serious illness if you do contract coronavirus.

2. How do I know whether my shortness of breath is an exacerbation of my asthma or COPD or due to coronavirus?

It may be difficult to distinguish the respiratory symptoms associated with COVID-19 (shortness of breath, cough) considering they are similar to asthma/COPD:

- Shortness of breath
- Cough

Understanding your symptoms

The symptom which differentiates asthma or COPD from COVID-19 is experiencing a **“new” fever**. Fever is the symptom that has been most common of any symptom in confirmed cases of COVID-19.

The HSE are particularly focusing on any patient who is experiencing a **“new” fever or a “new” cough**. If you are feeling **hot and cold, shivering, achy bones, contact your local GP**.



Shortness of Breath



High Temperature



Cough



Breathing Difficulties



Coronavirus
COVID-19
Public Health
Advice

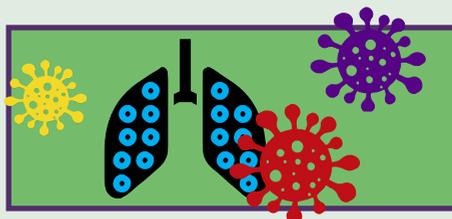
The main symptoms of the virus are:

- Fever (high temperature)
- A cough (wet or dry)
- Shortness of breath
- Breathing difficulties

Other symptoms include fatigue, headaches, sore throat, aches and pains.

3. What to do if you are exhibiting ‘new’ symptoms

Contact your local GP over the phone: they will guide you through what happens next. You will likely be put forward for testing and be requested to self-isolate until the results come back. The healthcare system will look after you and will ensure that you have the best treatment to help you in this scenario. Question 5 gives more details regarding testing.



4. How will the virus impact on my asthma or COPD?

If you have a long-term respiratory illness or a condition that can compromise respiratory function, you may experience more severe symptoms upon contracting COVID-19. As a number of the symptoms are respiratory, it is important that you monitor your symptoms carefully. Look out for additional symptoms named above and contact your GP by telephone if you have any concerns.

It is very important that you take your medication as advised by your healthcare professional and manage your asthma or COPD as well as possible. Your doctor could ask you to self-isolate if they think your flu-like symptoms could be due to coronavirus. Self-isolation could be requested:

- before you get tested for coronavirus
- while you wait for test results
- if you have had a positive test result for coronavirus

People in at risk groups, such as those with chronic respiratory conditions need to especially protect themselves from coronavirus. This is on top of the advice that everyone needs to follow. There is more advice available for people in at-risk groups and their carers on the HSE Website - follow this link

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/at-risk-groups.html>

Some people who are extremely medically vulnerable need to follow different advice called cocooning.

5. Who can get tested?

The Department of Health has changed its case definition for testing to prioritise:

Those who are vulnerable (those with an underlying condition as listed above)

Those whom are at the highest risk of exposure (Health Care Professionals)

Those with direct exposure to a confirmed case.

Priority Testing means that people with asthma and COPD are more likely to get tested and receive their results faster if they are displaying symptoms.

A quick testing period is necessary for the vulnerable groups to ensure they receive suitable treatment.

6. Do vaccines against pneumonia protect you against the new coronavirus?

No. Vaccines against pneumonia, such as pneumococcal vaccine and Haemophilus influenza type B (Hib) vaccine, do not provide protection against the new coronavirus. The virus is so new and different that it needs its own vaccine. Researchers are trying to develop a vaccine against COVID-19, and WHO is supporting their efforts.

Although these vaccines are not effective against 2019-nCoV, vaccination against respiratory illnesses is highly recommended to protect your health. Speak to your GP or to your local pharmacist about the flu vaccination.

7. Are antibiotics effective in preventing and treating the new coronavirus?

No. Antibiotics do not work against viruses, only bacteria. COVID-19 is a virus meaning antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment.

However, if you are hospitalised due to COVID-19, you may receive antibiotics because bacterial co-infection is possible.

8. Is it safe to go out?

People who have severe asthma and/or severe COPD are asked to cocoon from coronavirus. For more information on cocooning please follow this HSE Website link <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/at-risk-groups.html>. Where possible, vulnerable people should follow HSE guidelines:

- DO NOT use public transport
- DO NOT go to meetings, social gatherings, group events or crowded places
- DO NOT have visitors at your home
- Where possible, order your groceries online or have some family or friends drop them off
- KEEP AWAY from vulnerable people: older people, anyone with long-term medical conditions and pregnant women

Contact your local authority if you require assistance - if you need help; if you know someone who needs help; if you want to offer help — get in touch today: 0818 222 024

9. Should I stop smoking?

Smoking and second hand smoke exposure affects the immune system in the airways, lung tissue and throughout the body. Stopping smoking reduces your risk of smoking-related illness.

Smoking reduces your natural protection against infections, like coronavirus. This means that if you smoke:

- you have an increased risk of getting acute respiratory infections
- you have a greater risk of the infection being more serious than it would be for someone who does not smoke
- Second-hand smoke has similar effects. Children who are exposed to smoke are at increased risk of acute respiratory infections



Pregnancy and coronavirus

I am pregnant and also have asthma? Do I need to be concerned for my baby and is there anything else I need to do to protect myself? If you are pregnant, The National Maternity Hospital has published document offering on coronavirus and maternity advice that you may find useful. You can find it here:

http://www.nmh.ie/_fileupload/COVID-19%20Internet/FB%20Coronavirus%20and%20Maternity%20Advice%203003%20V3.pdf

If you are concerned about your health in pregnancy, please contact your midwife or maternity consultant.

It is essential that you continue to manage your asthma as well as possible during your pregnancy. Please visit our website www.asthma.ie for our hints and tips on how to manage your asthma well.

HOW TO STAY WELL WITH ASTHMA AND COPD DURING COVID 19

Keep yourself mobile by getting up and moving around as much as possible. If you have a garden or backyard go out and get some fresh air. Adhere to the public health directives on how far you can go from your home, up to 2kms. Self-isolation can be boring or frustrating. It may affect your mood and feelings. You may feel low, worried or have problems sleeping. It can help to stay in touch with neighbours, friends, or relatives by phone or over social media. The Asthma Society has lots of helpful hints and tips. Visit www.asthma.ie

Please see below for resources, information, and advice for people with asthma and COPD on how to manage their conditions well during Covid-19.

CORONAVIRUS (COVID 19)

For advice about coronavirus
and your asthma or COPD
go to: asthma.ie

ASTHMA SOCIETY OF IRELAND

ASTHMA & COPD
ADVICELINE
1800 44 54 64

STAYING WELL WITH COPD: WHAT DO I DO?

Continue to follow the HSE public health guidelines on coronavirus.
Wash your hands often for 20 seconds with warm soapy water.
Try to avoid touching your face.
Continue with your medication as prescribed by your physician.
Use a spacer.

→ Use the traffic lights system on your COPD communications card to know how you are feeling to and manage your health

→ Do some 'Breathe Easier' exercises

www.copd.ie/living-with-copd/know-your-copd/
Pursed-lip breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing

Active cycle of breathing techniques

→ Check your inhaler technique, using the videos on the Asthma Society website:

www.asthma.ie

→ Know your triggers

→ Consider going smoke-free for your health and do not smoke in the home

→ Continue to eat well

→ Take gentle exercise: Siel Blue are running daily online classes for free suitable for people with COPD.

Visit www.sielbleu.ie and check their Facebook page

→ Keep a COPD journal to document feeling well and to monitor your symptoms – you CAN be in charge of this condition

→ Get a good night's sleep

→ Use relaxation techniques and mindfulness to help you relax

→ Get FLU vaccination, if possible

WHO DO I CONTACT?

Contact the COPD Adviceline to speak to a respiratory nurse on staying well.
Adviceline Freephone 1800 83 21 46

Speak to your GP, your pharmacist or practice nurse about receiving your FLU vaccinations if possible.

Visit COPD Support Ireland to find out more about living well and staying well
www.copd.ie

Download the HSE Coronavirus national booklet for your information:

www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/

www.gov.ie/en/publication/472f64-covid-19-coronavirus-guidance-and-advice/#information-booklet

Call your Local Authority if you need help; if you know someone who needs help; if you want to offer help — get in touch today: 0818 222 024

STAYING WELL WITH ASTHMA: WHAT DO I DO?

Continue to follow the HSE public health guidelines on coronavirus.

Wash your hands often for 20 seconds with warm soapy water.

Try to avoid touching your face.

Continue with your medication as prescribed by your physician.

Use your spacer.

- Know your asthma triggers
- Have an asthma action plan completed with your GP
- Downloadable asthma action plan available from www.asthma.ie
- Check your inhaler technique, using the videos on the Asthma Society website www.asthma.ie
- Continue to eat well
- Continue to write in your asthma journal to document feeling well and to monitor your symptoms

- Continue to take exercise. Warm up before exercising and warm down after exercising. Always have your reliever (blue) inhaler with you when exercising
- Get a good night's sleep
- Use relaxation techniques and mindfulness to help ease any anxiety at this time
- Get FLU vaccination, if possible

WHO DO I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?

Contact the Asthma Adviceline to receive hints and tips from the respiratory nurse on staying well.

Adviceline Freephone 1800 44 54 64

Speak to your GP, your pharmacist or practice nurse about receiving your FLU vaccinations if possible.

Visit the Asthma Society of Ireland's webpage to find out more about living well and staying well: www.asthma.ie

Download the HSE Coronavirus national booklet for your information:

www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/

www.gov.ie/en/publication/472f64-covid-19-coronavirus-guidance-and-advice/#information-booklet

Call your Local Authority if you need help; if you know someone who needs help; if you want to offer help – get in touch today: 0818 222 024



NOTE:

Your local Authority has set up a COVID-19 Community Response Forum in your area. The Community Response Forum has a phone line available 7 days a week. The phone line is for high risk people or those asked to cocoon. You can ring the phone line to get help with deliveries of groceries, medicine and fuel. – Call your local authority for information 0818 222 024.

Launching The 5th May 2020



BEATING BREATHLESSNESS

Welcome to our new Asthma and COPD Beating Breathlessness WhatsApp Patient Service.

Message the Respiratory Nurses to get advice and your questions answered on asthma and COPD.

WE AT THE ASTHMA SOCIETY ARE BEATING BREATHLESSNESS EVERY DAY!

Message **0860590132**



WhatsApp **ASTHMA COPD Ireland**