

## Keeping well while working during COVID-19

Covid-19 has proven to affect the employment status of a huge number of people in Ireland. Minister for Social Protection, Regina Doherty, warned that 400,000 people could lose their jobs. Many more have been given reduced hours. Where possible, employers have been encouraged to make arrangements to allow employees to work remotely.

For some roles, this may not be possible. Essential retail outlets were identified that are to remain open to ensure proper running of essential services:

- The retail and wholesale sale of food, beverages and newspapers in non-specialised and specialised stores
- Retail sale of household consumer products necessary to maintain the safety and sanitation of residences and businesses
- Pharmacies/chemists and retailers providing pharmaceuticals, pharmaceutical or dispensing services
- Opticians/optometrists
- Retail sale of selling medical and orthopaedic goods in specialised stores
- Fuel stations and heating fuel providers
- Retailers involved in the repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and bicycle repair and related facilities (for example, tyre sales and repairs)
- Retail sale of essential items for the health and welfare of animals, including animal feed and medicines, animal food, pet food and animal supplies including bedding
- Laundries and dry cleaners
- Banks, post offices and credit unions
- Retail sale of safety supply stores (for example, work clothes, Personal Protective Equipment)
- Hardware stores, builders' merchants and stores that provide hardware products necessary for home and business maintenance, sanitation and farm equipment, supplies and tools essential for gardening/farming/agriculture
- Retail sale of office products and services for individuals working from home and for businesses
- Retailers providing electrical, IT and phone sales, repair and maintenance services for home

## Workers with asthma and COPD

People with asthma and COPD who are continuing to work at this time are encouraged to protect themselves and their health in so much as possible. Although mild to moderate asthma sufferers are not considered extremely medically vulnerable, there is still a chance that you could become severely ill if you contract COVID-19. Here is how you can protect yourself during working hours:

- Wash your hand regularly with disinfectant soap and warm water
- Avoid touching your face
- Implement physical distancing between co-workers and customers during working hours
- If employees share break rooms, stagger lunch hours restrict overcrowding
- Implement a strict and regular disinfecting process for all surfaces, including within shared spaces.

During working hours, and in your home life, it is vital that you manage your asthma and COPD to minimise the risk of an exacerbation, asthma attack, or becoming unwell. Take all medication and inhalers as prescribed by your doctor. Know your triggers and avoid them where possible. Download an Asthma Action Plan from [asthma.ie](http://asthma.ie) and complete it with your local GP or a respiratory nurse. If you are feeling unwell, if you are showing COVID-19 symptoms, or if you have been in direct contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case, contact your GP over the phone.

### Workers dealing with the general public

This may include people working in supermarkets, factories, petrol stations, or in any other setting which will not allow them to work from home. People working while dealing with other members of the public are advised:

- wash your hands properly and regularly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough and sneeze
- put used tissues into a bin and wash your hands
- do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- implement social distancing where possible

If you are a vulnerable person as identified by the department of health or the department of An Taoiseach, then you should consider taking sick leave. Speak with your employer and if necessary speak to your GP about the need for social isolation.

For specific information and advice for your employment sector in relation to COVID-19 visit <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3b16b6-covid-19-coronavirus-information-from-across-government/>