

# BACK2WORK

LIFE ALONGSIDE COVID-19 Proudly supported by AstraZeneca



## EMPLOYER CHECKLIST: HOW TO SUPPORT WORKERS WITH ASTHMA AND COPD<sup>1</sup>

People with asthma and COPD are not more likely to catch COVID-19, but are at risk of experiencing more severe symptoms if they do. While the freedom to return to work could be exciting for many, it can be a daunting time for someone with an underlying respiratory condition like asthma or COPD. The Asthma Society wants to encourage employers to protect people with asthma and COPD from COVID-19 as they return to work.

### EDUCATE YOURSELF

- Contact the HSA at [wcu@hsa.ie](mailto:wcu@hsa.ie) or **1890 289 389** if you want advice on coronavirus prevention measures in the workplace
- Learn more about asthma and how to keep your workplace asthma friendly:
  - Visit [asthma.ie](http://asthma.ie)
  - Speak to our asthma and COPD nurse specialists through our **Adviceline** on **1800 44 54 64**
  - Send a text to our new Beating Breathlessness patient support **WhatsApp service** on **086 059 0132**
- Familiarise yourself with the Return to Work Safety Protocol: [dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Return-to-Work-Safely-Protocol.html](http://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Return-to-Work-Safely-Protocol.html)

### PREPARE YOUR BUSINESS

- To assist with the return to work, employers can find details of existing supports and resources in place for businesses impacted by COVID-19 at: [dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Supports-for-businesses-COVID-19.html](http://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Supports-for-businesses-COVID-19.html)
- Utilise free information and guidelines from HSA.ie: [hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19/return\\_to\\_work\\_safely\\_templates\\_checklists\\_and\\_posters](http://hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19/return_to_work_safely_templates_checklists_and_posters)
- Develop and/or update a business COVID-19 Response Plan and make it accessible to all employees

### PREVENT THE SPREAD

- Provide hand sanitizer and sufficient hand-washing areas for employees and customers
- Make advice and training available on how to preform hand hygiene effectively: [www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html](http://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html)
- Ensure social distancing is adhered to at all times
- Limit the use of air conditioning which can contribute the spread of COVID-19
- Employers must implement a thorough and regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces
- Employers must have a solid plan in place and react quickly when dealing with a suspected case of COVID-19 in the workplace

### BE COMPASSIONATE

- Discuss the workplace risk exposure and asthma/COPD related risk with your employees
- If possible, consider flexible working hours to allow employees with asthma and COPD to avoid peak public transport hours
- Allow remote working where possible
- People with asthma and COPD may find their breathing is restricted when wearing a mask or face covering: [asthma.ie/document-bank/cloth-face-coverings-for-people-with-asthma-and-copd-during-covid-19](http://asthma.ie/document-bank/cloth-face-coverings-for-people-with-asthma-and-copd-during-covid-19)
- Employers should ensure workers are made aware of and have access to any business provided Employee Assistance Programmes or Occupational Health service
- Be considerate of your employees mental health at this time and provide workplace supports where appropriate

The key to effective implementation of the infection prevention and control measures as well as occupational health and safety measures in the workplace is having a strong communication and shared collaborative approach between employers and workers.

<sup>1</sup> Employees with a severe COPD or severe asthma diagnosis (for definition, see [asthma.ie/news/cocooning-and-severe-asthma](http://asthma.ie/news/cocooning-and-severe-asthma)) are considered extremely medically vulnerable and so may need to continue cocooning. They should speak with their GP and respiratory specialist. Healthcare workers, may require a letter from their specialist.

ASTHMA & COPD ADVICELINE

**1800 44 54 64**

BEATING BREATHLESSNESS WHATSAPP

MESSAGE **086 059 0132**