

Coronavirus FAQ's

What are the symptoms of the Coronavirus?

The NHS have updated the potential symptoms of the Coronavirus as outlined below -

- a high temperature or shivering (chills) – *this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)*
- a new, continuous cough – *this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours*
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- shortness of breath
- feeling tired or exhausted
- an aching body
- a headache
- a sore throat
- a blocked or runny nose
- loss of appetite
- diarrhoea
- feeling sick or being sick

These symptoms do not necessarily mean someone will have the virus and the symptoms are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as a cold and flu.

Colleague Contact

The first point of call for colleagues should be their line manager, however if a colleague or a manager has any further questions, queries or concerns please contact the HR Advice Line on 01926 516 469 or email at hr.advice@midcounties.coop where an advisor will be able to assist. The advice line is open from 9am until 5pm, Monday – Friday.

Colleague Frequently Asked Questions

Please note that some of the following guidance is only applicable for sites in England, we have a small number of sites operating in Wales and advice may slightly differ dependant on restrictions in Wales.

Up to date guidance can be found here <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

If you require any further clarity, please contact the HR Advice Line and an advisor can assist you in working through the guidance specific to you for your area.

1. I have started to display symptoms of the Coronavirus can I be in work?

In line with government guidance colleagues that have a high temperature paired with other Coronavirus like symptoms (as outlined above), that feel unwell are advised to stay away from work until they feel fit and able to return.

In this scenario colleagues must notify their manager that they are unfit for work in the same way as they would for any other spell of sickness absence.

Colleagues may also choose to obtain a test to identify if they are positive for the Coronavirus or not.

2. Can I arrange to get tested for the Coronavirus?

The government have ceased free symptomatic and asymptomatic testing for the majority of the public; however, they have confirmed that specific groups that are at higher risk of getting seriously ill from the Coronavirus will continue to receive free testing. If you are a colleague in this category you will be provided tests by the government and informed of how you can re-order these when you need more.

For colleagues that are not eligible for free testing the Society has made the decision to allow colleagues to access testing kits through our Healthcare business at cost price, please use the following link to access this page - <https://www.cooppharmacy.coop/products/pharmacy/covid-19-home-testing/>

3. I have taken a test for the Coronavirus and have tested positive; can I attend work, if I am fit and able to do so?

The Society will continue to follow government guidance, and, in this scenario, colleagues are advised to remain away from work for a period of five full days as evidence suggests this is the time period when you will be most infectious to others. On the sixth day you will be able to return back to work.

You should inform your manager as soon as you are aware that you have tested positive for the Coronavirus and provide evidence of your positive result.

4. I have tested positive for the Coronavirus, who do I need to notify and what evidence do I need to provide?

You will need to notify your manager in line with normal absence reporting procedures, there is no longer a requirement to log your positive result with the HR team.

If you are positive for the Coronavirus you will also need to provide evidence of this to your line manager as this will be required to pay any enhancements to company sick pay where applicable. Evidence may be an email or text confirming you have tested positive or a picture taken of the positive test result.

5. I have tested positive for the Coronavirus and am required to remain off work for 5 days, how will I be paid whilst I'm off work?

Colleagues will be processed as sickness for the duration of this time, the Society are conscious that we do not want to financially disadvantage colleagues for refraining from work during this time and helping to protect other colleagues. Therefore, the Society will ensure that if you do not qualify for company sick pay or due to exhaust your entitlement, we will continue to top this up.

Please note the Society will only top up company sick pay where a colleague has provided satisfactory evidence of a positive test result.

6. I have tested positive for the Coronavirus, I have refrained from work for five full days, however I am still testing positive, can I return back to work?

Government guidance suggests that those colleagues who are positive with the Coronavirus are most infectious within the first five days of their symptoms. In line with government guidance you are able to return to work on the sixth day regardless of whether you are still testing positive.

If on the sixth day you still have symptoms of the Coronavirus and feel too unwell to return back to work, then you should notify your line manager in line with normal absence reporting procedures.

In this scenario a colleague's sick pay arrangements will return back to normal from the sixth day i.e. the Society will not continue to top up and colleagues may lapse into SSP.

7. Colleagues that are at higher risk of becoming severely unwell if they were to catch the Coronavirus.

We may have some colleagues irrelevant of vaccination status that continue to be at higher risk of becoming severely unwell if they were to catch the Coronavirus. This status differs from those colleagues that were previously deemed as 'vulnerable' or 'clinically extremely vulnerable', the following link categorises the conditions that may fall into the higher risk category, but another indicator of this will be whether you are receiving free testing from the government.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/who-is-at-high-risk-from-coronavirus/>

If you feel you meet this criteria you should make your line manager aware as the Society may need to conduct an individual risk assessment with you and the Society will also need to assess the length of time another colleague may have to refrain from work if positive from the Coronavirus to ensure that you remain safe in the workplace.

Line managers are advised to seek advice from Health and Safety and the HR team in this scenario for further advice and clarity.

8. I have tested positive for the Coronavirus and I am able to work from home, will this be permitted?

Yes, if you are fit and able to work and have the ability to fully complete your work at home then this will be permitted.

9. I have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for the Coronavirus or someone in my household has tested positive, am I able to attend work?

Yes, unless you have tested positive for the Coronavirus yourself or have developed a temperature and other Coronavirus symptoms then you are able to attend work.

10. My child has tested positive for the Coronavirus and I need to stay at home to care for them, how will my time away from work be treated?

Any time away from work will be unpaid and taken in line with the Society's Emergency Leave Policy, a copy of which can be found here - <https://colleaguesconnect.midcounties.coop/working-here/policies/emergency-leave-policy/>

11. What is the Society's stance on wearing face coverings?

Colleagues should refer to local guidelines within their specific groups for guidance on face coverings or speak with their line manager if they require any clarity on whether face coverings should be worn.

12. I have been asked to book my Coronavirus vaccine or booster; will I be paid if this is arranged during working hours?

Where a colleague is required or chooses to obtain their vaccination or booster, colleagues should still try to book these appointments outside of working hours. Where this is not possible the Society will consider some flexibility with working hours/shifts to allow a colleague to attend their appointment. Where this cannot be accommodated the time away from work will be considered as unpaid or a colleague may choose to use annual leave if they wish. Colleagues are asked to provide their line manager with as much notice as possible of the appointment and must obtain approval from their line manager in advance of any appointment.

13. How can I help prevent the spread of Coronavirus in the workplace?

Colleagues can take their own preventative measures to avoid the spread of the infection through basic hygiene practices, for example –

- Utilise the Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) which has been put in place to protect you and others around you
- Wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- Always wash your hands when you get home or into work
- Using hand sanitizers regularly where available
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- Put used tissues in the bin straight away and wash your hands afterwards
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces