



## COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

### Advice from the Chief Medical Officer to Parents of School and Pre School Children

2 March 2020

Dear Parents,

You will be aware that following the identification of a confirmed case of Covid-19 in the east of the country, a secondary school will close for 14 days, the duration of the Covid-19 incubation period. Pupils and teachers at that school have been asked to restrict their movements, avoiding crowded settings and any large events, including sporting events, over that time period.

I understand the concern arising from this decision, which was not taken lightly.

The decision to close the school for 14 days is a precautionary one and arises because pupils and teachers may have had direct contact with the confirmed case.

However, siblings not attending the school concerned, parents and other members of the community are not regarded as contacts and can **continue their daily routine as normal**.

While there is much to learn about Covid-19, we do know that:

More than 80% of people who have contracted the virus have experienced it in a mild form and generally recover in 2 - 3 weeks, while 20% experience a more severe form of the disease, this tends to be associated with older age (greater than 60 years old and having other health issues, e.g. heart disease).

As with influenza, the people most at risk are the elderly and those with underlying illness

- Covid-19 does not appear to be as infectious as some other diseases - while a person with measles typically passes the virus on to 14 other people, with Covid-19 that number is estimated between two and three.
- Covid-19 is spread through close contact with an infected person's body fluids (e.g. droplets from coughing or sneezing), or by touching surfaces that an infected person has coughed or sneezed on.

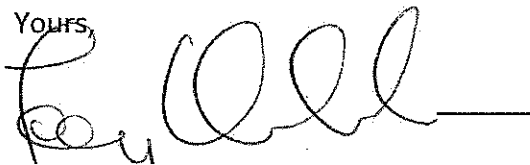
- Current information suggests the Covid-19 virus may survive a few hours on surfaces and can be killed with simple household disinfectants.
- The most important action we can take to protect ourselves from Covid-19 is regular hand-washing and good cough/sneeze hygiene.

Finally, I want to reassure you that the Health Services prioritise patient confidentiality in all cases. Our priority is to create an environment where people feel safe and protected when coming forward to seek medical help.

To this end we will not reveal patient details other than the gender, general location (east, west, north, south of Ireland) and the source of the infection. We have called, therefore, on the media to respect patient confidentiality.

Attached is a list of Frequently Asked Questions and there is further information available at [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie).

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Holohan', followed by a horizontal line.

Dr Tony Holohan  
Chief Medical Officer  
Department of Health