

A healthcare worker wearing a white protective suit with blue accents, a blue hairnet, clear face shields, and a white surgical mask. They are wearing blue gloves and are focused on a task. The background is blurred, showing another person in similar attire.

Healthcare Learners Coronavirus Advice Guide

November 2020



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This document aims to serve as an aid to healthcare learners to provide them with useful hints, tips and advice to use during the current COVID-19 pandemic and to protect against other nosocomial infections. The advice given in this document has been collated from questions posed to HEE and experiences shared by healthcare learners working on the front line. It is important to acknowledge that advice published in this guide is correct at time of publication but subject to change as per Government and NHS guidelines.

HEE acknowledges the differential effect Covid-19 is having on BAME learners and those with underlying health conditions. We advise those who are concerned to discuss this with their supervisor and local Occupational Health departments. Further information on this topic [can be found here](#).

Further information to supplement this document can be found on the [HEE website](#).

Follow this link for queries relating to [recruitment, redeployment, ARCP and assessment](#) for doctors in training.



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Keeping Safe at Work



PPE

It is imperative that all healthcare learners wear PPE in accordance with Public Health England, NHS and their local trusts recommendations. We advise all learners to familiarise themselves with this information and ensure they know where PPE is stored on their placements. Healthcare learners who are in clinical environments requiring fit-tested PPE should receive this as part of their induction. Concerns regarding PPE whilst on duty should be raised with the shift supervisor.

[See a quick guide to putting on PPE here.](#)

Self-Isolating and Covid Testing

All healthcare learners are advised to follow NHS advice regarding isolation. The advice is available on the [dedicated COVID-19 NHS Website](#). Below we have outlined some of the key information. It is important to check the latest advice on the website if you need to self-isolate or organise a test.

You must self-isolate for at least 10 days if:

- you have symptoms of coronavirus and you tested positive, had an unclear result or did not have a test
- you tested positive but have not had symptoms

If you have symptoms, the 10 days starts from when they started. If you have not had symptoms, the 10 days starts from when you had the test. But if you get symptoms after your test, self-isolate for a further 10 days from when your symptoms start.

Keep self-isolating if you have any of these symptoms after 10 days:

- a high temperature or feeling hot and shivery
- a runny nose or sneezing
- feeling or being sick
- diarrhoea

Only stop self-isolating when these symptoms have gone. If you have diarrhoea or you're being sick, stay at home until 48 hours after they've stopped.

Self-Isolating and Covid Testing (continued)

You'll need to isolate for 14 days if:

- someone you live with has symptoms or has tested positive
- someone in your support bubble has symptoms or tested positive
- you've been told to self isolate by NHS Test and Trace

If you have any queries regarding isolation or testing that are not answered by the NHS COVID-19 website contact your local Occupational Health department.

National sickness guidelines are currently paused for the duration of the pandemic for sickness absence related to COVID-19. For normal sickness absence that is not related to Covid-19, normal provisions will still apply.

Read more guidance about isolating after returning from abroad. Follow this link for [guidance on isolating after returning from abroad](#).

Guidance on Covid Leave is often provided on an individual employer basis. [NHS guidance on Covid Leave can be found here](#).

Keeping Your Phone Protected

If you use a mobile phone as part of your work please ensure to keep it clean to minimise risk of disease transmission and infection. A useful tip is to place your phone in a clear, protective bag whilst at work. Alternatively, a range of clear, touch-sensitive phone covers can be bought online. This will ensure it is protected but still accessible during working hours. Before going home you can easily remove the phone from the bag, clean it with a single antibacterial wipe then continue to use it.

Please use wipes that are appropriate for phones because some wipes can damage your touch screen. Apple recently published guidelines on using 70% isopropyl alcohol wipes on disinfecting mobile phones. A quick search on the internet will identify commonly available wipes suitable for mobile phones. Here is a link to [**a video from a microbiologist on how to safely clean your phone.**](#)



Handwashing and Moisturising

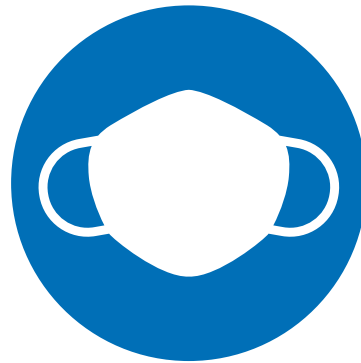
The importance of consistently washing your hands is well advertised to both healthcare professionals and the general public. However, it is important to acknowledge the potential skin irritation caused by frequent handwashing.

Whilst it is of course vital to maintain hand hygiene, it is also important to regularly moisturise your skin to prevent dryness, particularly in the harsher months of winter. This is particularly important to those with pre-existing skin conditions.

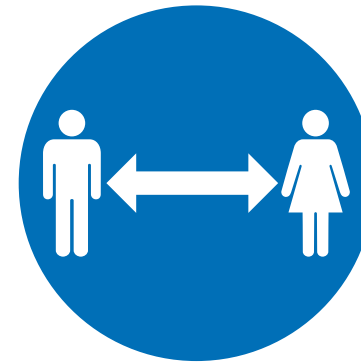
Find dermatological guidance on [how to protect your hands here](#).



HANDS



FACE



SPACE

Taking Breaks

Often during busy shifts we forget the basic things we advise our patients to do regularly. Taking time out of your day for a well-deserved break where you can eat, drink and relieve yourself is imperative to ensure you are able to deliver high-quality patient care.

Often we have to be flexible when taking breaks to ensure safe staffing is maintained. It is however important you set some time apart for you, and to reflect on what has happened so far and what's left for the rest of the day.



Handovers

Team handovers can involve a lot of people coming together to a common space at a given time. If possible, electronic or phone handover can be considered. Naturally, it can be difficult to maintain social distancing with a large team, or even find the space to host such a meeting. Where possible, we encourage electronic/phone handover with a staggered structure such that interaction with others is minimised.

Alternatively, consider finding a larger and confidential space where team members can abide by social distancing. It is always best to consult with local departmental leads to ensure handovers are done in a confidential and safe manner for both patients and staff. They may also be able to help source larger venues or technology to aid socially distanced handovers.





Keeping Safe Whilst Commuting

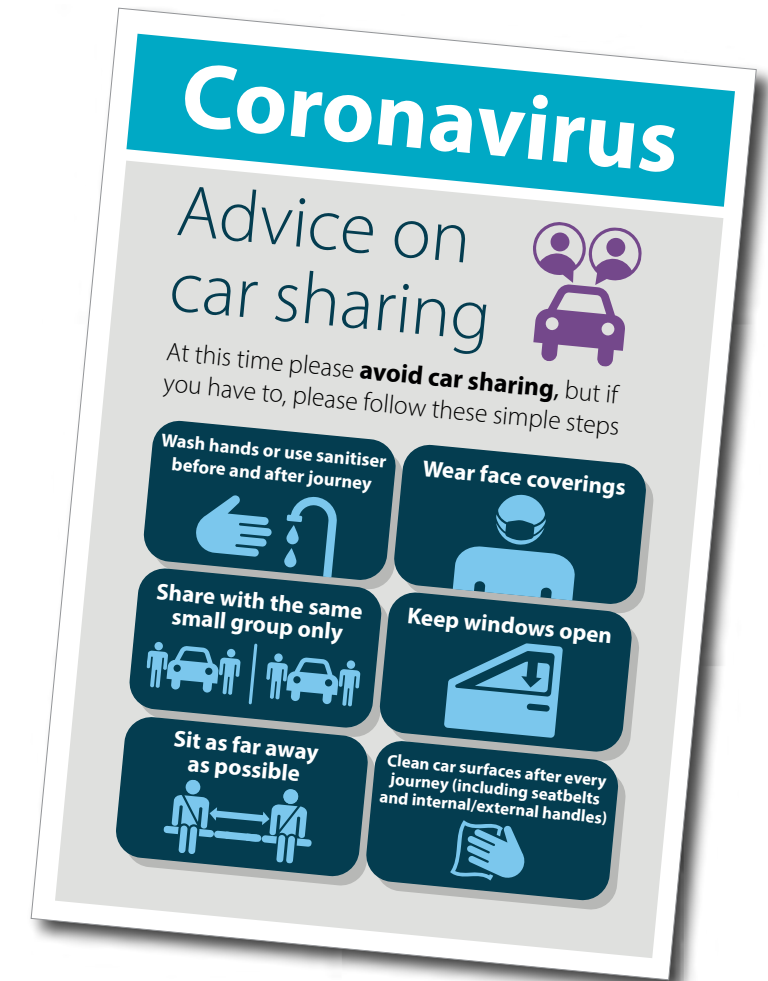
Car Sharing

Often due to the pattern of shift work many healthcare professionals car share. However at this time it is advised to avoid car sharing with those outside your household or support bubble unless necessary. Being in close proximity with other individuals can increase your risk of virus transmission.

If car sharing is necessary, we advise the following:

- Ideally wash hands or use sanitiser before and after the journey
- Wear a face covering throughout the journey
- Open windows for ventilation
- Socially distance from other passengers as much as possible
- Travel side by side or behind each other rather than facing one another
- Car share with the same small group of individuals where possible and ensure these groups are not larger than 6 people
- Clean commonly touched car surfaces after every journey such as seatbelts, steering wheel and internal/external handles

Find further [guidance on car sharing](#).



Public Transport

When using public transport you must observe social distancing rules as dictated by your local Covid Alert level. It is mandatory to wear face coverings throughout the journey unless for health, age or disability reasons.

It is important to wash or sanitise your hands before wearing or handling a face covering. You then need to ensure your face covering covers both your nose and mouth and is not adjusted unless you wash or sanitise your hands. Before and during your journey maintain at least 2 metres distance from other travellers and limit contact with surfaces where possible.



Public Transport (continued)

Help keep yourself, other passengers and transport staff safe by taking the following precautions:

- ensure you maintain social distancing, where possible, including at busy entrances, exits, under canopies, bus stops, platforms or outside of stations
- limit the number of people that you come into contact with, for example avoid travelling during peak hours
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or the inside of your elbow when coughing or sneezing
- travel side by side or behind other people, rather than facing them, where seating arrangements allow
- stay outdoors, rather than indoors, where possible
- avoid loud talking, shouting or singing
- dispose of waste safely, including items such as used disposable face coverings
- be prepared to queue or take a different entrance or exit at stations
- wait for passengers to get off first before you board
- wait for the next service if you cannot safely keep your distance on board a train, bus or coach
- avoid consuming food and drink on public transport, where possible
- be aware that not all disability is visible and some people may be exempt from wearing a face covering

Walking and Cycling

It is advised to walk or cycle where possible. This will help to reduce pressures and exposure on public transport and the road network. When cycling you must attempt to keep a suitable distance from other people.

For example, when waiting at crossings and traffic lights ensure you remain 2 metres away from other people. When parking your bike ensure adequate distance is left between your bike and others. It is important to wash your hands before and after you cycle as well as ensuring you sanitise your bike appropriately during uses.

Government guidance on [how to travel safely](#) can be found here.





Protect Those at Home

Protect Those at Home

Keeping yourself and your household safe is of utmost concern to healthcare learners working through the pandemic. Below we have set out a typical routine

- Go to work in personal clothes
- Once at work change into a fresh pair of scrubs
- Attempt to shower at work before you leave

If it is not possible to shower at work, remove the scrubs and change into a new set of clothes before going home. [See the how to don and doff guide by Public Health England here](#).

- Once home ensure all clothes go straight into the wash and try to shower immediately. It is often useful to alert those at home before you are about to come inside so they can adequately socially distance.
- It is useful to place used clothes in a washable bag, this allows you to easily place your clothes in the washing.
- Ensure used scrubs are not brought home.

Further information on how to [wash clothes to ensure decontamination](#) can be found here.

Top Tips:

- Keep a pair of shoes for work
- Ensure to regularly clean contact areas of vehicles before and after journeys
- Limit taking unnecessary items to work. Whatever is taken to work should be appropriately cleaned afterwards. This includes cutlery, water bottles, stethoscopes and lanyards

Wellbeing and Self Care


Wellbeing and Self Care

HEE continues to work closely with national, regional and local partners to ensure the health and wellbeing of students and trainees is prioritised throughout the pandemic.

Being able to recognise signs of burnout is essential to maintaining your wellbeing, especially during the stresses of living through a pandemic. Everyone reacts to stress differently, and it is important that you acknowledge how you react and behave when you are stressed. These could include irritability, exhaustion, disturbed sleep, reduced appetite and reduced performance. If you are suffering, there is always help available. This could be within your faculty, with colleagues and supervisors, or with family and friends.

It is important to continue to devote time to activities which help manage your stress and bring you satisfaction. For some this includes exercise, reading or other hobbies.

As part of the NHS People Promise, NHS England & Improvement has published a range of resources and [guidance to support the health and wellbeing of NHS staff](#).



“We have to protect ourselves to protect each other”

Contact

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www.hee.nhs.uk