

10 February 2020

Novel Coronavirus Infection – Update for General Practitioners

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Dear Colleague,

With regard to the emerging picture of Novel Coronavirus Infection, the following information is provided as an update.

Patients should not be alarmed as it is still more likely that anyone with flu-like symptoms will have the flu.

The most important thing is that any patient who thinks they may have symptoms should not try to attend the GP surgery, OOH service or hospital emergency departments in person.

They are being advised to ring ahead to inform the receptionist if they have recently travelled to Wuhan or mainland China before a decision is taken by the GP/OOH or ED triage as to where the patient will be seen.

The important points for each GP setting to consider are the following:

1. PHONE CONTACT

Option 1: Decide if you want your reception staff to ask every patient if they have returned from mainland china in the last 14 days or are, they concerned they have been exposed to Corona Virus. If yes: do not give an appointment but take their contact details, (travel history, any symptoms). Advise them to stay at home and a designated GP will ring them back to undertake phone triage as per the [algorithm](#).

Option 2: Advise your reception staff that if anyone mentions China, Coronavirus, recent travel, etc. they ask to take the patients contact details (note the patients recent travel history, any symptoms). Advise them to stay at home and a GP will ring them back ASAP. The GP then rings back and does a risk assessment as per the [algorithm](#).

2. PATIENT PRESENTING TO THE SURGERY

Locate where you will you put poster advising them to identify themselves to reception or to return to their car and ring reception. We suggest having a notice at the main entrance and reception with alcohol rub and surgical mask available.

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If a patient arrives at a GP surgery/OOH with potential symptoms and who has recently travelled to an affected area, GPs should try to place them in isolation, where possible. Each practice will need to decide on what suits their setting best, based on the HPSC guidance below.

3. CHECKLIST FOR THE PRACTICE

- The Nominated Lead Person in practice is.....
- My reception staff know what to do if patient phones concerned about possible coronavirus exposure or symptoms
- My practice team know what to do if someone identifies themselves to them
- Everyone knows where the patient is to be placed while awaiting assessment
- All practice team members have refreshed their Hand Hygiene technique
- All clinical team know how to put on and removing necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- All clinical team know how to access most up to date algorithm and guidance from the HPSC to triage patients suspected of coronavirus infection or exposure
- All clinical team know how to contact public health and national ambulance service
- You have adequate alcohol rub, surgical masks and PPE packs easily accessible

4. WEB LINKS HSE-HPSC GUIDANCE FOR ALL PRIMARY CARE SETTINGS

- [Advice for General Practitioners in relation to assessment and management of patients with suspected Novel Coronavirus infection](#)
- [Algorithm](#)
- [Posters](#)
- [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\): Putting on and taking off Personal Protective Equipment correctly](#)
- [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control \(ECDC\) key facts on Coronavirus](#)

Finally, please find attached a letter from Dr Colm Henry, Chief Clinical Officer, HSE providing further guidance and support to GPs.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Tony Cox,
ICGP Medical Director

Dr Nuala O'Connor,
ICGP GP Lead - HSE Antimicrobial
Resistance and Infection Control Team

