

Horsham District Council Advice to Employers, Food Businesses & Food Handlers on Coronavirus:

This current advice has been cited by reliable sources, however, it is subject to change as advice is being updated daily.

What is Coronavirus?

Coronavirus is the umbrella term for any virus of the Coronaviridae family that can effect man, birds and many mammals.

The virus has been named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2. Also known as “SARS-CoV-2”

The disease this virus causes has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated “COVID-19”)

Covid-19 is the cause of the current global disease making all the headlines

What are the coronavirus symptoms?

Coronavirus infects the lungs. The symptoms start with a fever followed by a dry cough, which can lead to breathing problems.

Anyone who suspects they may suffering from symptoms should report it to a supervisor and take immediate action to self-isolate

What if a colleague or one of your an employee’s has returned from travel overseas to affected areas?

Persons returning from certain regions in the last 14 days should stay at home whether they have symptoms or not. This advice is being updated on an ongoing basis. They should call NHS 111 for current advice.

What you should do if you, a colleague or one of your an employee’s test positive or exhibit symptoms of Covid-19?

If someone is confirmed as being positive or if they develop symptoms they should be sent home to self-isolate.

Current advice suggests that the disease is passed on through close contact with infected people. That’s why self-isolation is so important

Further government advice for those being required to self-isolate can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

What is the risk of the virus being transmitted by food?

The Food Standards Agency state that current government advice suggests it is very unlikely that you can catch coronavirus from food. Some experts have advised that Covid-19 is relatively unstable on the surface of foods and it is believed that infection from ingestion of the virus is unlikely.

How do food handlers reduce the risk?

Washing with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds, followed by effective hand drying remains the single most important method for hand hygiene and preventing the spread of infectious diseases.

Hand sanitisers can also protect against disease-causing microbes, especially in situations when soap and water aren't available. They're also proven to be effective in reducing the number and type of microbes.

What about people who come into contact with a suspected case in the workplace?

There are no current restrictions or special measures for anyone coming into contact with a suspected case in the workplace. There is no need to close the workplace or send other staff home at the moment.

Do I need to undertake any additional cleaning in the workplace?

Cleaning routines should continue as normal.

Picking up the virus from surfaces is considered low risk, however, if someone has been showing symptoms, a thorough clean of the premises & surfaces should be undertaken. Particular attention should be given to high-contact areas such as toilets, door handles, telephones and any hand contact areas.

Further government advice on cleaning can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

What about raw products imported from other Countries?

Current advice from the European Food Agency is that the risk of infection from imported raw products such as food, drinks and packaging is extremely low. There is no evidence that food is a likely source or route of transmission

What about customer deliveries?

On-line orders and home deliveries can carry on as normal. When delivering to domestic premises you should make arrangements for the delivery driver to leave items outside for collection. The delivery should not enter the home if anyone has self-isolated.

Should employees be wearing facemasks in the workplace?

Wearing of facemasks such as surgical masks or respirators are not recommended. There is little evidence of any real benefit of facemasks other than in a healthcare setting.

The best way to reduce any risk of infection is good hygiene and avoiding direct or close contact (closer than 2 metres) with any potentially infected person.

What about customer contact in a shop, restaurant, etc.?

There is currently no specific advice for employees who have regular contact with the public or customers.

Current advice suggests that the disease is passed on through close contact with infected people. 'Close Contact' is currently defined as being within 2 metres of an infected person for more than 15 minutes.

Interaction with customers is not likely to be considered as being 'Close Contact' however this is an area that food business operators need to risk assess and ensure that customer contact is limited and as brief as possible

This advice is being updated on an ongoing basis. Further current government advice for employers and businesses can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19>