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Revision History				
DATE	REVISION	SECTION	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE	ORIGINATOR
04/03/2020	R0	All		L. Healy
05/03/2020	R1	10 & 11	Additional sections added	A. Burke
10/03/2020	R2	8,13,14,15,16	Updated sections	A. Burke

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## **1. Purpose**

This policy has been developed in accordance with advice provided through the HSE and Department of Health and will be updated when the advice changes.

## **2. Scope**

This policy is available and communicated to all employees and relevant stakeholders.

## **3. Statement of Intent**

It is our aim to minimise the spread of infection for our employees through the implementation of controls which reduce the transmission and spread of germs. We aim to promote and maintain the health of staff through the control of infectious illnesses. There is an ongoing outbreak of a novel Coronavirus in China. Infections have been reported in other countries. This policy covers the Coronavirus and requires cooperation from staff and management in its implementation.

## **4. What are Coronaviruses**

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that can cause illnesses. Some of these illnesses are very mild, like the common cold, while others are more severe, like SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome).

## **5. Novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV**

A “novel coronavirus” means a new type of coronavirus that has never been seen in humans before. The coronavirus recently identified in China is one of these. This new coronavirus is being named “2019–nCoV”.

## **6. Symptoms of novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV**

It can take up to 14 days from exposure to the virus for the symptoms of this 2019-nCoV to appear.

Common signs of infection include:

- respiratory symptoms i.e. cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties
- fever
- In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death

## **7. Treatment of novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV**

There is no specific treatment for 2019-nCoV at present, but the symptoms of the virus can be treated.

## **8. Close Contact**

This is only a guide, but close contact can mean:

- Spending more than 15 minutes face-to-face contact within 2 metres of an infected person
- Living in the same house or shared accommodation as an infected person

If you think that you have been in close contact with someone who has/may have the coronavirus, do not come to work. Contact HR for further information.

## **9. Protecting Staff from novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV**

To protect yourself and others from coronavirus (COVID-19) it's important to think about how the virus is spread. Coronavirus is spread in sneeze or cough droplets. To infect someone, the virus has to get from an infected person's nose or mouth into another person's eyes, nose or mouth. This can be direct or indirect (on hands, objects, surfaces). Keeping this in mind will help you to remember all the things you need to do to protect yourself and others from the virus.

- Wash hands often with antibacterial liquid soap and use the no touch hand sanitisers provided in all toilets and on entry/ exit to each office
- Bottles of sanitiser will be made available to all field employees
- Dettol spray will be available in the kitchen
- Wipes will be provided throughout the offices to enable employees to clean and disinfect objects and surfaces such as laptops and desks
- When coughing or sneezing cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve
- Throw any used tissues away into a closed bin and wash your hands
- Try where possible to avoid shaking hands
- If you are experiencing any symptoms, do not come to work. Contact HR for advice

Always wash your hands:

- After coughing or sneezing
- After toilet use
- Before eating
- Before and after preparing food
- If you are in contact with a sick person, especially those with respiratory symptoms
- If your hands are dirty

## **10. Exclusion**

**If any employee or any member of their family:**

- has not been in mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Iran, four regions in northern Italy (Lombardy, Veneto Emilia-Romagna and Piedmont), or any other affected areas in the last 14 days

**AND**

- has not been in contact with a person with novel coronavirus

**AND**

- has not attended a healthcare facility where patients with novel coronavirus are being treated in another country

Then no specific measures are needed.

**If within the last 14 days**

- any employee or any member of their family has been in mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Iran, four regions in northern Italy (Lombardy, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna and Piedmont), or any other affected areas

**OR**

- has been in contact with a person diagnosed with novel coronavirus

**OR**

- has attended a healthcare facility in another country where patients with novel coronavirus are being treated

**AND**

**has developed symptoms suggestive of acute respiratory illness they should**

- Stay at home
- Not go out to public places
- Not attend our offices
- Phone their GP or emergency department for medical advice, rather than turning up in person
- Make sure that, when you phone, you mention your recent travel or exposure. These health services will arrange for you to get medical help

#### **11. If you are planning on visiting an affected area**

If you are currently in or are planning on travelling to an impacted area the following will apply;

- With immediate effect anyone travelling to or returning from an affected area will be asked not to return to work when they return.
- You will be asked to self-isolate and get tested for the virus as soon as possible
- You will not be allowed to return to work for a period of 2 weeks or until tests are returned negative

#### **12. Business Travel**

We would recommend that all non-essential business travel should be postponed until a further review takes place at the end of March. This will be reviewed frequently.

Until such a time whereby a further review takes place, please where possible utilise the use of Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams for meetings.

#### **13. Self-isolation**

Self-isolation means staying indoors and completely avoiding contact with other people.

- Stay at home, in a room with the window open
- Keep away from others in your home as much as you can
- Check your symptoms - call a doctor if they get worse
- Phone your doctor if you need to - do not visit them
- Cover your coughs and sneezes using a tissue - clean your hands properly afterwards

- Wash your hands properly and often
- Use your own towel - do not share a towel with others
- Clean your room every day with a household cleaner or disinfectant
- Do not share your things
- Do not go to work, school, religious services or public areas
- Do not use public transport or taxis
- Do not invite visitors to your home

#### **14. Limited social interaction**

Limited social interaction is avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible. You may be asked to limit social interaction if you have been in close contact with a case of the coronavirus.

- You can still go outside for walks, runs or cycles on your own
- You should not spend time in close contact with other people
- Do not go to school, college or work
- Do not use public transport
- Do not go to meetings, social gatherings, group events or crowded places
- Do not have visitors at your home
- Do not go shopping - where possible, order your groceries online or have some family or friends drop them off
- Do not contact older people, people with chronic health problems and pregnant women
- Do not travel outside Ireland

#### **15. Remote working**

You may be asked to work from home due to the coronavirus. If this is the case, to ensure that performance does not suffer we advise employees to:

- Choose a quiet and distraction free working space
- Have an adequate internet connection for their job
- Dedicate full attention to their duties during working hours
- Adhere to break and attendance schedules

We recommend that all employees bring their laptops home with them every evening until such a time that further notification is issued.

#### **16. FAQ**

##### **Q 1. What will happen if I have to self-isolate?**

If you have been advised to self-isolate or not to come to work the following will apply;

- If you have the facilities to enable you to work from home and you are feeling well enough to do so, Obelisk will facilitate this as much as possible
- If you do not have the facilities to enable you to work from and/or you are not feeling well enough to work, then the absence notification policy will apply
- In circumstances where an employee has been advised to self-isolate/ not attend work and wishes to take annual leave special consideration will be given to this

**Q 2. Will I be paid if I have to self-isolate/ stay home from work?**

If you are working from home, you will be paid as normal

- If you do not have the facilities to work from home, as per the absence notification policy Obelisk will pay 3 days sick pay per year. You may be entitled to claim illness benefit. Please see <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/ddf6e3-illness-benefit/> for more details
- If you decide to take annual leave this will be paid as normal

**Q 3. What should I do if I think I have contracted the coronavirus?**

- Do not come to work – isolate from other people. This means going into a different well-ventilated room with a phone
- Phone your GP or emergency department - if this is not possible, phone 112 or 999
- Contact HR immediately

**Q 4. What will happen if an employee contracts the coronavirus?**

- All employees will be asked to self-isolate and get tested for coronavirus

**Q 5. Where are the current places that there is a spread of the coronavirus?**

- China
- Hong Kong
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Iran
- Japan
- Italy

**Q 6. What should I do if I'm returning from a place where there is spread of coronavirus?**

- Contact HR before coming to work who will advise the process

**Q 7. What are the high-risk categories for complications if they contract the virus?**

- Those who are 60 years of age and over
- Those who have a long-term medical condition such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes or liver disease, High blood pressure or cancer
- Those who are pregnant

**Q 8. If I'm in a high-risk category, what should I do?**

- Contact HR for further information

**The above information is correct as of 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and will be updated regularly.**