

COVID-19 in the Workplace: What to do as an Employer

If you suspect a Coronavirus case in your workplace, it is vital to follow the right processes and abide by guidelines to reduce risk and ensure safety. For further advice, call your dedicated member support helpline on **0844 561 8133** to speak with an advisor.

What Should I do if I Suspect a Coronavirus Case in my Workplace?

1. If an employee has symptoms, do all you can to ensure they do not come into work. If they show symptoms while at work, send them home immediately and get them to order a test as soon as possible
2. Colleagues who have been in contact do not initially need to isolate, but could be informed of the employee in question showing symptoms
3. If your employee tests negative they can return to work, following any guidance in their results letter
4. If your employee tests positive, NHS England will notify all individuals who have been in close contact. You can pre-empt this by notifying those who have been in close contact in the workplace, and getting them to self-isolate for 14 days.

How is 'Close Contact' Classified?

Someone in 'close contact' is a person who has been close to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 anytime from 2 days before the person was symptomatic, up to 7 days from the onset of symptoms (this is when they are infectious to others). This could be a person who:

- spends significant time in the same household
- is a sexual partner
- has had face-to-face contact (within one metre), including:
 - being coughed on
 - having skin-to-skin physical contact, or
 - contact within one metre for one minute
- has been within 2 metres of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes
- has travelled in a small vehicle, or in a large vehicle or plane

Do I Pay SSP to Employees with Confirmed or Suspected Coronavirus?

If an employee contracts coronavirus, they should be treated in the same way as any other employee who is unable to do their work because of illness. They will be entitled to at least statutory sick pay (SSP) provided they meet the eligibility criteria, which includes earning at least £120 on average per week.

An important point to remember is that SSP eligibility was relaxed in response to the pandemic, which means that coronavirus SSP is paid from the first day off work; employees are not required to serve the normal three 'waiting days' before SSP becomes payable.

Some employers offer an occupational sick pay scheme, and the employee's eligibility against any company criteria should be assessed. If they qualify, they should be paid at that rate.

In some cases, employees who have received a positive test result will not in fact feel 'too ill' to work but must still refrain from attending the workplace by self-isolating for 10 days. During self-isolation, employees should receive at least SSP if they qualify. Again, the normal waiting days do not need to be served.