



First Aiders Guidance : COVID-19

This guidance has been issued to First Aid responders to reduce the risk of exposure to Coronavirus during this time of pandemic. It is based on guidance from Public Health and recognises that, as a first responder, a First Aider may come into contact with people of unknown medical history/symptoms and therefore there is a possible risk of cross infection when administering First Aid, including that of coronavirus, unless precautions are taken.

It does not replace the requirement for First Aiders to conduct a dynamic risk assessment of any given first aid situation that may arise, in accordance with standard first aid training.

If you feel that you have any concerns or issues after consulting this guidance and continuing the role as a First Aider, then advice should be sought from the Health & Safety Team.

Coronavirus and route of transmission

The most common symptoms of coronavirus are:

- ❖ Recent onset of a new, continuous cough and/or
- ❖ High temperature
- ❖ Shortness of breath
- ❖ Loss of taste and smell

Other symptoms are less common e.g. headache, flu-like symptoms, sore throat, but may still arise.

Transmission is through respiratory droplets via 2 routes:

- ❖ Direct transfer of droplets via inhalation to mouth, nose or eyes.
- ❖ Touching a surface, person or object that is contaminated and then transferring the secretions to own mouth nose or eyes e.g. when touching your face.

General Precautions

Precautionary measures require everyone to avoid getting infected via these transmission routes through handwashing, not touching your face and physical distancing.

First Aiders should identify at-risk situations and in any non-emergency situation the potential for symptoms should be assessed prior to giving advice/administering first aid and, where possible, should be delivered while maintaining physical distancing.

Where physical distancing is not possible, PPE must be worn.

Try to reduce the amount of time you are in close proximity to the patient, administer the first aid, make them comfortable and then go to a safer distance.

If appropriate, you may want to ask them to turn their head away from you while you are administering first aid to reduce the risk of being exposed to respiratory droplets.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- ❖ PPE is for single use only - must be changed after each first aid intervention and not used between patients.
- ❖ Needs to be put on and taken off ('donned' and 'doffed') in the correct order – see below.
- ❖ To be disposed of as clinical waste.
- ❖ Based on the requirement that physical distancing cannot be maintained whilst providing first aid, the following PPE must be worn as a minimum:
 - Disposable gloves
 - Face mask
 - Disposable plastic apron or disposable coveralls
 - Eye protection
 - Clinical waste bag
- ❖ Provision of alcohol hand rub and masks for patients are also advised.

Donning and Doffing PPE

Put on PPE every time when administering First Aid and breaking physical distancing rules.

It is important to keep own hands away from face when donning and doffing PPE, to avoid self-contamination during the process.

Health Protection Scotland [guidance](#) on donning, doffing and disposal
NHS [video](#)

Donning

- Wash or sanitise own hands
- Put on PPE in the following order:
 - Apron or coverall
 - Mask
 - Eye protection
 - Gloves

Doffing

- Take off PPE in the following order
 - Gloves
 - Apron or coverall
 - Eye protection
 - Mask
- Place all items in clinical waste bag
- Wash own hands

Individuals presenting with symptoms of Coronavirus

- ❖ If someone shows the signs of coronavirus, keep person physically distanced unless wearing PPE.
- ❖ Provide them with a mask and keep others away.
- ❖ Line Manager to make arrangements for them to go home and keep them isolated until they leave site (this room will need to be fully decontaminated after use).
- ❖ If the patient is significantly unwell e.g. extremely short of breath, phone ambulance on 999 immediately (this room will need to be fully decontaminated after use).

In a situation where a person has suffered illness or accident, the first aiders who arrive on scene are taught to consider not only the condition of the casualty, but also, first and foremost, to ensure their **own safety**. This includes any hygiene and infection risk from the casualty.

First aiders are trained therefore to consider any risk from the casualty from poisons or infectious agents, and to make a decision on the basis of the evidence available at the time.

The decision in these circumstances may be to administer CPR by carrying out chest compressions, **but not delivering rescue breaths**. There is some evidence that adequate ventilation may be achieved if the airway is kept open during such chest compressions. The primary responsibility is to preserve life and first aid should be administered if required and until the emergency services attend.

The advice is to follow the procedure outlined below:

▪ Assess the situation and check for your own safety
▪ Check for response but do not check breathing the normal way
▪ NO touching the face/head and no mouth to mouth at all
▪ DO NOT PUT FACE CLOSE TO THE CASUALTY, DO NOT DO HEAD TILT CHIN LIFT
▪ If there is no response/signs of life then call 999 straightaway asking for an ambulance. If alone, use your mobile on loudspeaker so you can begin CPR.
▪ Place a piece of cloth over the casualty's nose and mouth to reduce risk of infection and begin COMPRESSION ONLY CPR
▪ Ask someone to fetch a defibrillator and attach as soon as available

When paramedics come, they should have relevant PPE - only then would air way manoeuvres be started.

Resources

[Resuscitation Council guide](#) which has a good video (made in someone's house during lockdown).

Other resources

[UK Government guidance for first responders](#)

[Health & Safety Executive](#)

[British Red Cross](#)

[St Johns Ambulance](#)

[UK Government guidance use of PPE](#)

[Health Protection Scotland resources](#)