



Guidance

Guidance for shipping and sea ports on coronavirus (COVID-19)

Updated 24 September 2020

This guidance was withdrawn on 19 July 2021

Relevant information from this guidance is now included in [COVID-19: Safer transport guidance for operators](#)

Contents

- [Symptoms](#)
- [What you need to know](#)
- [Background](#)
- [What to do if you have had a person with confirmed COVID-19 in a marine setting](#)
- [Specific action for ships and shipping companies](#)
- [Limiting spread of COVID-19 in marine settings](#)
- [Face coverings](#)
- [Cleaning and waste](#)
- [Disembarkation](#)

[Print this page](#)

Please note

This guidance is of a general nature and should be treated as a guide, and in the event of any conflict between any applicable legislation (including the health and safety legislation) and this guidance, the applicable legislation shall prevail.

Symptoms

The most important symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

For most people, COVID-19 will be a mild illness.

If you have any symptoms of coronavirus you should:

- self-isolate at home or in your cabin
- if possible, [arrange to have a test to see if you have COVID-19](#)

What you need to know

Before boarding the ship, crew and passengers should be asked if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19.

If someone develops [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, they should be sent home or to their cabin to self-isolate and, if possible, [arrange to have a test to see if they have COVID-19](#).

Everyone should be reminded to wash their hands for 20 seconds more frequently than normal.

Crew and passengers should be given clear instructions on what to do if they develop symptoms and how and to whom they should report this.

Everyone should observe social distancing, maintaining a distance of 2 metres from other people, where possible.

The Master of the Ship should notify the Port Health Authority about any suspected cases of COVID-19 as soon as possible – the authority will then inform the local health protection team (HPT).

Appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning of surfaces that a person with symptoms has come into contact with are key measures to stop the spread of the virus.

In England, it is a legal requirement that a face covering must be worn when travelling on public transport. This includes on a ferry, hovercraft or other vessel.

Background

This guidance will assist ships (including cargo vessels, ferries and cruise ships) and sea ports in providing advice to staff on addressing COVID-19, on ships and in sea ports.

Ships and sea ports will collectively be referred to as a 'marine setting' in this guidance.

This guidance may be updated in line with the changing situation.

What to do if you have had a person with confirmed COVID-19 in a marine setting

If anyone becomes unwell with [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, they should be sent home or to their cabin to self-isolate and, if possible, [arrange to have a test to see if they have COVID-19](#).

If they need clinical advice in England or Northern Ireland, they should [visit NHS 111 online](#) (or call 111 if they don't have internet access). If docked in Scotland, use NHS 24 and NHS Direct in Wales. In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. Do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

If a member of staff or passenger has helped someone who has [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves. They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell.

The HPT or equivalent local arrangements in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, will also advise on the process to follow for disembarkation where this is relevant.

For a vessel, the Master should be informed and should report to the Port Health Authority. In England, the Port Health Authority will liaise with the local Public Health England HPT who can advise on assessment, testing and infection control.

If anyone is severely unwell then contact should be made with the nearest Port Health Authority immediately in order to arrange disembarkation and transfer to an appropriate facility. The Port Health Authority must be informed of possible COVID-19 infection if this is suspected.

Specific action for ships and shipping companies

Preparation

Pre-travel information to crew and customers should cover:

- the [symptoms](#) of COVID-19
- health risks and considerations on health services in other countries for vulnerable groups, such as elderly people or those with underlying medical conditions
- importance of preventive measures
- any pre-boarding assessment

Ships should ensure adequate medical supplies, equipment and PPE are available onboard. Further details of supplies specific to COVID-19 are available in the [disease commodity package](#).

Pre-embarkation

Crew and passengers with [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 should be denied embarkation or cabin isolated. If possible they should [arrange to have a test to see if they have COVID-19](#).

All crew and passengers should be reminded of the need to report [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 as soon as possible with clear instructions on what they should do and the designated person that they must report to.

During the voyage

Ships are required to notify the port of arrival of any illness on board by submitting a Maritime Declaration of Health (MDH).

Limiting spread of COVID-19 in marine settings

Marine settings can help reduce the spread of COVID-19 by reminding staff and passengers of the public health advice.

Staff and visitors should be reminded to wash their hands more frequently than normal.

Frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard cleaning products.

This [guidance on safer workplaces](#) covers port operations.

In addition:

- healthcare workers in close contact with a suspected case of COVID-19 should wear the correct PPE
- staff should only go into the cabin if essential, and no-one should be allowed in the cabin unless wearing appropriate PPE consisting of a fluid-repellent surgical face-mask, gloves and a disposable apron. Meals should be left outside the door and normal housekeeping duties suspended
- staff should wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds immediately after removing PPE, or alcohol hand sanitiser can be used
- advice about disposing of PPE is available as part of the guidance on cleaning and waste disposal below

Face coverings

It is the law that a face covering must be worn when travelling on public transport in England. This includes on a ferry, hovercraft or other vessels.

[Some people do not have to wear a face covering](#) including for health, age or equality reasons.

Further details are available in [safer transport guidance for operators](#).

The mandatory requirement for public transport does not require staff to wear a face covering. However, face coverings offer some benefits in situations where social distancing is difficult to manage. For example, when working in passenger-facing roles, including when providing assistance to disabled passengers.

Public health advice is that staff wear a face covering when they are unable to maintain social distancing in passenger-facing roles. There will be exceptional circumstances when a staff member cannot wear a face covering, or when their task makes it sensible, based on a risk assessment, for them not to wear a face covering.

If staff do wear a face covering, it is important that they [follow the guidance on face coverings](#).

Cleaning and waste

Guidance on [cleaning and waste disposal](#) is available.

Disembarkation

The HPT will advise on:

- arrangements for disembarkation for possible cases
- how close contacts will be managed
- who may remain on the vessel
- any recommended measures in terms of enhanced surveillance, reporting, cleaning and respiratory hygiene
- any follow-up monitoring required and where necessary limitations to further travel

[Back to top](#)

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