



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

## What you need to know

- Before boarding the ship, **crew and passengers should be asked about history of travel to an affected area and/or close contact with a person who has confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)** in the previous 14 days.
- 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.
- **Symptoms** include **cough, fatigue, fever, headache and muscle aches**.
- The Master of the Ship should **notify the Port Health Authority about any suspected cases** of coronavirus (COVID-19) as soon as possible, who will then inform the local Health Protection Team.
- **If someone becomes unwell** in a marine setting [and has a history of travel to an affected area and/or close contact with a person who has confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) in the previous 14 days,] they should be moved to a room or area where they can be **isolated** whilst awaiting medical assessment.
- Appropriate use of **personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning of surfaces that a symptomatic person has come into contact with** are key measures to stop the spread of the virus.

## Background

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

The marine setting will be contacted by the local Public Health England Health Protection Team who will undertake a risk assessment and advise on any actions or precautions that should be taken.

The Health Protection Team will also be in contact with the patient directly to advise on isolation. They will be in touch with any close contacts of the person with confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) to provide them with appropriate advice.

For those who are identified as a **close** contact of the person with coronavirus (COVID-19):

- they should self-isolate at home or in their room, for a period of 14 days from the last time they had contact with the person with confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)
- they should note the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are cough, fatigue, fever, headache or muscle aches
- they should visit NHS 111 online <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> or call 111 for reassessment if they develop symptoms or their existing symptoms worsen within their 14-day self-isolation period and they will be tested if they become unwell with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- they will be eligible for statutory sick pay (SSP)

Passengers or crew who have not had close contact with a person who has confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) do not need to take any additional precautions and normal routines should continue.

A close contact is defined as:

- living in the same household or
- direct contact with their body fluids or
- face-to-face contact, for example talking or
- being within 2 metres of the person for more than 15 minutes or
- being advised by a public health agency that they are a close contact

The Health Protection Team will also advise on the process to follow for disembarkation where this is relevant.

Close co-operation by the Master of the Ship and his/her delegates with the Port Health Authority and the Health Protection Team will be essential in assessing and managing the risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) in marine settings.

### **What to do if someone in a marine setting becomes unwell and believes they have been exposed to coronavirus (COVID-19)**

If anyone becomes unwell in a marine setting:

- **and** has arrived from any affected countries or areas (full list available [here](#)),
- **or** has been in close contact with a confirmed case (see above)

the unwell person should be moved to a room or area where they can be isolated behind a closed door. Ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them then they should be moved to an area which is at least two metres away from other people.

Visit NHS 111 online <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> or call 111 for further advice and keep them isolated until advised otherwise or call 999 in

an emergency (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 they need to go to the bathroom whilst waiting for medical assistance, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected using your regular cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

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

No further actions need to be taken while laboratory test results from the unwell person are awaited.

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 coronavirus (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 coronavirus (COVID-19)
- health risks for vulnerable groups
- importance of preventive measures
- any pre-boarding screening

Ships should ensure adequate medical supplies, equipment and Personal Protective Equipment are available on board. Further details of supplies specific to coronavirus (COVID-19) can be found [here](#) (see disease commodity package).

### **Pre-embarkation**

- Crew and passengers from affected countries who report illness prior to embarkation should be reported to the national public health authorities.
- All crew and passengers should be asked about travel from an affected area or close contact with a person with confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) in the 14 days prior to embarkation.
- All crew and passengers should be reminded of the need to report respiratory illness 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)
- The Master should assess the health of their vessel before submitting the MDH at the first port of call in the UK and any other UK ports requesting the MDH
- Staff should be provided with ongoing training related to reducing the risk of the spread of infection including handwashing, respiratory etiquette, waste disposal, and the correct use of PPE

## **Preventing spread**

Decisions about isolation should distinguish between people with respiratory illness who have no history of travel to affected areas and/or close contact with a case of COVID-19, and those who do.

Actions on isolation have been described above. 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 hot water for 20 seconds immediately after removing PPEs, 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.

## **Cleaning and waste**

You can find guidance on cleaning and waste disposal [here](#).

## **Disembarkation**

The HPT will advise on:

- whether possible cases should be permitted to disembark
- 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.

## Useful Links

Healthy GateWays: [Advice for ship operators for preparedness and response to the outbreak of COVID-19](#) document provides further information.