

From the Chief Medical Officer  
Dr Michael McBride

HSS(MD)12/2020



## FOR ACTION

Chief Executives, Public Health Agency/Health and Social  
Care Board/HSC Trusts/ NIAS  
GP Medical Advisers, Health & Social Care Board  
All General Practitioners and GP Locums (for onward  
distribution to practice staff)  
OOHs Medical Managers (for onward distribution to staff)

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Your Ref:  
Our Ref: HSS(MD)12/2020  
Date: 6 March 2020

**PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FULL CIRCULATION LIST**

Dear Colleague

## MESSAGE FOR ALL CLINICAL STAFF ENCOUNTERING PATIENTS WITH RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS ARRIVED FROM OVERSEAS

### ***Action Required***

Chief Executives must ensure that this information is drawn to the attention of all clinical staff to enable them to respond accordingly

The HSCB must ensure that this information is cascaded to all General Practitioners and OOH facilities immediately.

1. This letter updates the advice sent on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020 in HSS(MD)8/2020. There is one key change, **the inclusion of the whole of Italy in the case definition.**
2. As this is a rapidly evolving situation **health professionals are now advised to regularly check the gov.uk website regarding the latest information on case definition.** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public#risk-level>
3. It is essential that an accurate travel history is obtained from all patients with acute respiratory infections, using any one of the following: cough or fever or shortness of breath to help identify potential cases.

4. If a patient has returned from the specific areas below **in the last 14 days**, they should be advised to call 111 (and press 1 on the menu list) and self-isolate even if they do not have symptoms:

- Iran,
- Specific lockdown areas in Northern Italy as designated by the Government of Italy,
- Special care zones in South Korea as designated by the Government of the Republic of South Korea,
- Hubei province (as previously noted)

5. If they have returned from the areas listed below **in the last 14 days** and develop symptoms, however mild, they should self-isolate at home immediately and call their GP, GP out of hours, or local Emergency Department for advice. They should not attend any healthcare setting before ringing in advance. Individuals who returned from these areas who do not have any symptoms, do not need to self-isolate. Asymptomatic individuals can ring 111 (and press 1 on the menu list) for advice. **It is important to take a detailed travel history from those returning from Italy as parts of this country fall into the categories described above and below.**

- **Italy (the whole of the country, except areas which are listed above)**
- China (except Hubei province which is listed above)
- Hong Kong
- Macau
- Taiwan
- Japan
- Malaysia
- Republic of Korea (except areas which are listed above)
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Vietnam
- Cambodia
- Laos
- Myanmar

6. Those who have returned from previously identified geographic areas within the past 14 days and develop symptoms, however mild, should self-isolate at home immediately and call GP, GP out of hours, or local Emergency Department for advice. They should not attend any healthcare setting before ringing in advance.

7. The Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England, in conjunction with the relevant authorities in the Devolved Administrations, will continue to produce updated guidance for health care professionals and other Departments and their authorities, including schools, as and when necessary. The most up to date guidance is available on the gov.uk website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance#guidance-for-health-professionals>

This can also be accessed through <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus>

Yours sincerely



**Dr Michael McBride**  
**Chief Medical Officer**

## Circulation List

Director of Public Health/Medical Director, Public Health Agency (*for onward distribution to all relevant health protection staff*)

Assistant Director Public Health (Health Protection), Public Health Agency

Director of Nursing, Public Health Agency

Assistant Director of Pharmacy and Medicines Management, Health and Social Care Board (*for onward distribution to Community Pharmacies*)

Directors of Pharmacy HSC Trusts

Director of Social Care and Children, HSCB

Family Practitioner Service Leads, Health and Social Care Board (*for cascade to GP Out of Hours services*)

Medical Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Consultants, Occupational Health Physicians and School Medical Leads*)

Nursing Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Community Nurses, and Midwives*)

Directors of Children's Services, HSC Trusts

RQIA (*for onward transmission to all independent providers including independent hospitals*)

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Regional Medicines Information Service, Belfast HSC Trust

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Joe Brogan, Assistant Director of Integrated Care, HSCB

This letter is available on the Department of Health website at

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/professional-medical-and-environmental-health-advice/hssmd-letters-and-urgent-communications>