

National Updates



Covid-19: Here's what restrictions will be in place from today

Ireland's Covid-19 restrictions in place since 27 March – are changing slightly from today. The changes, announced by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar on Friday, are most significant for cocooners who will be allowed – albeit in a limited way – to leave their house.

The Taoiseach has announced [2 changes to the restrictions](#) put in place to protect us all from the spread of COVID-19 that will come into effect today.

The changes are that:

- people can travel up to 5 kilometres from their home to exercise
- those who are [cocooning](#) can leave their homes for exercise so long as they avoid all contact with other people

The roadmap sets out Ireland's plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions on:

- [18 May \(phase 1\)](#)
- [8 June \(phase 2\)](#)
- [29 June \(phase 3\)](#)
- [20 July \(phase 4\)](#)
- [10 August \(phase 5\)](#)

If you are cocooning, this means you can now leave your home **for exercise** as long as you avoid all contact with other people, you are still being advised not to go into shops and to keep a space of two metres between you and other people. After 18 May, there will be some more significant changes as Ireland embarks on a gradual re-opening as set out by the government. From then, outdoor work like construction and landscaping will be allowed to resume.

Some retail outlets like garden centres, hardware stores and repair shops will be allowed to re-open and some outdoor sporting and fitness activities in small groups will be allowed.

Download a copy of the [Government's Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business](#)



Flu jab programme extension sought

Minister for Health Simon Harris is seeking an extension of the seasonal influenza vaccination programme in order to minimise the risks associated with a possible resurgence of Covid-19 during the annual influenza season next winter.

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar has said that having to deal with both viruses at the same time would be an absolute disaster.

The Department of Health is currently engaging with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to ensure that an extra €50m can be set aside to expand the free flu vaccination programme this year.

He is seeking a funding commitment from the Minister for Finance to extend flu vaccination without charge to all children from ages two to 17 years inclusive.



Covid-19 mortgage break to be extended from three to six months

THE COVID-19 MORTGAGE payment break for people affected by the crisis is to be extended to six months. The break sees qualifying customers whose earnings have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic receive a break on loan repayments. The scheme began last month and was expected to be for three months but this has now been doubled.

The Banking & Payments Federation Ireland (BPF) said this morning that the extension will apply to all of its members, including the five main retail banks as well as other non-bank lenders. The BPF says that over 65,000 mortgage payment breaks and over 22,000 SME payment breaks have been granted since the initiative began on 18 March.



Coronavirus Reproduction Rate

THE REPRODUCTION RATE of the Coronavirus in Ireland has remained between 0.5 and 0.8, according to health authorities.

Bringing the reproduction rate – or the R0 – below 1.0, and keeping it there, has been a key aim for the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET) in order to slow the spread of the virus.



10 technology trends to watch in the COVID-19 pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, technologies are playing a crucial role in keeping our society functional in a time of lockdowns and quarantines. Things like On-line Shopping, Robot deliveries, Telehealth, Remote working, Distance learning, On-line entertainment, etc. are helping reduce the spread of the coronavirus while helping businesses stay open. Technology can help make society more resilient in the face of a pandemic and other threats and these technologies may have a long-lasting impact beyond COVID-19.

[Read more](#)



Time to focus on advance planning

In the context of Covid-19, the director of a new support service is urging the public to consider advance healthcare planning that will enable everyone to articulate their wishes with regard to future medical treatment. Áine Flynn, who is the Director of the Decision Support Service (DSS) - an essential new service currently being implemented for all adults who have difficulties with decision-making capacity – says the pandemic has focused people’s minds as they contemplate their own health and watch many in their community becoming ill.

The DSS was established under the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015, a significant piece of human rights-based legislation that provides statutory tools to allow people to plan ahead in case their decision-making becomes impaired. Ms. Flynn explained that although the 2015 Act is not yet operational and work to prepare for commencement of the legislation is ongoing, advance healthcare planning can be undertaken now.



Queen’s University Belfast to develop rapid test for Covid-19

Queen’s University has received funding to develop a rapid diagnostic test for Covid-19.

The trial is aimed at finding a highly accurate test which can show results within an hour, eliminating the need to send tests to a laboratory.

Professor Cliff Taggart, lead researcher from the Wellcome-Wolfson Institute for Experimental Medicine at Queen’s, said: “The local availability, speed and accuracy of the test will help inform public health preparedness and response in the ongoing pandemic.”

The study is in partnership with HiberGene Diagnostics Ltd, Medcaptain in China, and Italian Hospital IRCCS Ospedale Policlinico San Martino, which along with Queen’s, has been awarded €930,000 from EU Horizon 2020 for the project.



Local businessmen supply 3,000 PPE gowns to Offaly hospital

A group of innovative Offaly-based businessmen have come to the rescue of the regional hospital in the county, where personal protection equipment levels were at a critically low level. Around 3,000 disposable gowns were delivered to the Midland Regional Hospital in Tullamore for use by frontline staff.

The idea to make the PPE came about "almost by accident" when a local seamstress, Doris Healion, volunteered her expertise to extend the sleeves on some of the gowns which had already been distributed to frontline staff in Tullamore hospital. She used a derivative of a roofing fabric to extend the sleeves, which was found to be suitable.

Local businessman, Merv Colton contacted other suppliers of the material in Tullamore and Arklow and they set about finding companies willing to make the gowns. They had their first design meeting in the grounds of Tullamore Hospital. **Well done to all involved!!**

Join us on Facebook
Monday 4th,
Wednesday 6th
and Friday 8th
at 11am for
**Age & Opportunity
Movement Minutes**



#AgeandOpportunity

Local Updates



Getting Physical in Donegal plus 5,000 Bilingual Care Packs distributed across the County

A new physical activity initiative, primarily aimed at older adults who are cocooning, is being launched in the coming days by the HSE Community Physiotherapy, in partnership with the Age Friendly Programmes, Sport's Partnerships and Public Participation Networks across the North Region. Download the Physio leaflets - [English](#) or [Irish](#)

As part of this programme, Donegal Age Friendly and the YOURS (Young, Old, Understanding, Remembering and Sharing) project have created a simple pack that older adults in the communities will receive to their home. The pack includes the daily exercise programme to keep Older People Active and, on the move, this was supported by daily reminders on the local radio stations. The pack also includes quiz's, word games, poems, pictures to colour which will help keep the mind and brain active, some new recipes people might like to cook and a packet of Flower seeds that can be planted outside in their garden while getting some vitamin D. It is recognised that it's even more important now than normal for Older People to remain active while self-isolating both mentally and physically, this simple pack was designed to help older people get back to their normal activities quickly when the restrictions of Covid lift in the future.



Over 5000 bilingual packs were either posted on delivered to Older Peoples doors across the County of Donegal. Requests also came from neighbouring County's for the packs. They were a very much welcomed surprise and appreciated by all. **Well done to our Donegal Age Friendly Programme Manager Mairead Cranley and everyone involved!**



Anne Forde from the Marino Tuesday Club gave us a short update on what they are doing in the Fairview Marino Tuesday Club to try and stay in touch with their members since the Club closed. They have about 50 members, the majority of whom are aged over 80. Many live alone and the vast majority do not have access to the internet.

They began at the end of March by sending everyone a greeting card that included key information numbers eg. HSE/ALONE helpline, local



Garda station and GAA Club as well as the phone numbers for 2 volunteers, who also phone members regularly for a chat. At Easter volunteers did up flower baskets for members and cocooning volunteers, local children made cards to go with them and the fantastic staff of their local Tesco Express in Fairview gave them gifts of Easter eggs for everyone. Gardai from Clontarf and Tuesday Club drivers helped deliver them. Receiving them really lifted spirits.

Last week they sent out a writing project and a short newsletter. Anne told us that as time goes on they get the sense that people are doing okay in relation to practical supports, having someone to do shopping, pick up prescriptions, etc. but people are finding the lack of social interaction and not being able to get out of the house very difficult. As always the home care workers are a real lifeline for people. If it is likely that people over 70 are going to be asked to cocoon for many more weeks or even months we think it will be the impact of very limited social interaction that will be the hardest for them.

The fact that so many people over 70 do not use the internet is also a concern as this group is effectively excluded from the huge range of online opportunities for interaction with family, entertainment/access to exercise etc. that are continuing to develop. Anne would be very interested in any initiatives already underway and linking in with others to share ideas on other options for developing social contact /entertainment for this very significant group of older people. **Please email us if you wish to talk contact Anne.**



Leitrim is certainly 'in this together' as the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

With the response to coronavirus entering its second and important 'Wellbeing' phase, the Leitrim Community Forum has embarked on a major new initiative to help the physical and mental wellbeing of people throughout the county.

Leitrim COVID-19 Community Response Forum will this week be sending out a Well Being Pack to 1,500 older people as part of its 'In This Together' campaign which aims to assist them to Stay Connected, Stay Active and look after their Mental Wellbeing throughout the COVID-19 Emergency. The pack includes a new physical activity initiative, featuring eight daily exercises over a four-week period, primarily aimed at older adults who are cocooning. It is being launched by HSE Community Physiotherapy in partnership with the Age Friendly Alliance, Sport's Partnerships, Local Authorities and Public Participation Networks across Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan - Community Healthcare Organisation Area 1. Older people can follow this programme in Leitrim by tuning into Shannonside Lets Talk Programme.

Also included in the pack are quizzes, word games, gardening tips, healthy eating plans and adult colouring to keep our minds and bodies active as well as some goodies such as healthy treats or seeds.

It is very important to stay connected at this time and included in the pack is a new GAA initiative 'Its Good to Talk GAA' as well as details of our existing befriending services. If there is anybody who think might like to **avail of Leitrim GAA's offer, contact secretary.leitrim@gaa.ie or call 0876888978**



Contact the Leitrim **Covid 19 Helpline on 1800 852 389** if they would like to take part in our programming and activities or to receive a pack.

Your Voice



We've heard about so much good work going on all around the country, please let us know what's happening in your area so we can share those innovative ideas with everyone. Please email us your news to Rachel at reavy@meathcoco.ie Information is one thing we can share right now!

International Updates



Native American Covid-19 relief fund thanks Irish people for their support

The organisers of a fundraising campaign for Native Americans hit by the coronavirus have thanked Irish donors for their support. People from Ireland have been sending money through a 'GoFundMe' page set up to help Navajo and Hopi families, with many of the Irish donors saying it was a way of saying thank you for the support shown to Ireland during the Great Famine.

In 1847, the Choctaw Native American people sent \$170 of relief aid to Ireland, the equivalent of around \$5,000 today.

This came at a time when the Choctaw people themselves were living in relative poverty.

So far \$1.7m of the fund's \$2m target has been raised and organisers have thanked Irish people for their support.



EU DONATION PLEDGE Global leaders and international donors gathered in an online pledging conference led by the European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen. The initial plan was to raise at least 7.5 billion euros in order to accelerate and scale-up the development of a COVID-19 vaccine and guarantee equal distribution of the treatment. At the time of writing, the initiative, titled Coronavirus Global Response, has collected 7.4 billion euros. Each euro or dollar will be channelled through global health organisations such as CEPI, Gavi, the Vaccines Alliance and the Global Fund and Unitaid.



An interesting Dog story from Corsica!

Rapid and widespread screening for the novel coronavirus could soon be an option, thanks to man's best friend. Dogs are being trained by the emergency services in Corsica to try to detect people who may be infected. Firefighters in Ajaccio are using sweat samples from COVID-19 patients who've agreed to be part of the trial.

Corporal Mar Anto Costa, a firefighter based in Ajaccio, said: "Dogs are known for their capacity to recognise other diseases including

cancers, such as breast and prostate cancers and even diabetes, although it has not been officially proven. "What remains to be proven is whether the COVID-19 molecule emits a particular odour." The samples are placed in particular places to see if the dogs can then detect them. If this test is successful and the results are confirmed, it would allow rapid and massive screening of the population.

Important Tips

Always have your **Eircode** close by in case of emergency. You can find your Eircode [here](#)

Perhaps keep a **daily diary** to record the people you are in contact with every day, so if you develop symptoms it will be easier to trace them

Coronavirus COVID-19



If you have fever and/or cough you should stay at home regardless of your travel or contact history.

If you have returned from an area that is subject to travel restrictions due to COVID-19 you should restrict your movement for 14 days. Check the list of affected areas on [www.hse.ie](#)

How to Prevent

Wash Wash hands well and often to avoid contamination	Cover Cover mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing and dispose and discard	Avoid Avoid being close, near or around with unwashed hands	Clean Use disinfectant frequently touched objects and surfaces	Stop Shaking hands or hugging which may help or contribute to people	Distance Maintain 2m distance from other people especially those who might be unwell

All people are advised to:

- Reduce social interactions
- **Keep a distance** of 2m between you and other people
- **Do not** shake hands or make close contact where possible

If you have symptoms visit [hse.ie](#) OR phone HSE Live **1850 24 1850**

Symptoms

- Fever (High Temperature) ➤ A Cough ➤ Shortness of Breath ➤ Breathing Difficulties

For daily updates visit

www.gov.ie/health/covid-19
www.hse.ie

Health Services and Research Group
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Riann na Mídeanna
Government of Ireland

Useful Contacts

Age Friendly Ireland Shared Service Office T: 046 9097413 E: reavy@meathcoco.ie

HSE Advice Line: Callsave 1850 24 1850

Call from 8am – 8pm Monday to Friday and 10am to 5pm Saturday and Sunday

The following is the list of each **Local Authority's Helpline phone numbers**

Local Authority

Carlow County Council
Cavan County Council
Clare County Council
Cork City Council
Cork County Council
Donegal County Council
Dublin City Council
DLR County Council
Fingal County Council
Galway City Council
Galway County Council
Kerry County Council
Kildare County Council
Kilkenny County Council
Laois County Council

Community Response Number

1800 814 300
1800 300 404
1800 203 600
1800 222 226
1800 805 819
1800 928 982
01 222 8555
1800 804 535
01 890 5000
1800 400 150
1800 928 894
1800 807 009
1800 300 174
1800 500 000
1800 832 010

Leitrim County Council	1800 852 389
Limerick City and County Council	1800 832 005
Longford County Council	1800 300 122
Louth County Council	1800 805 817
Mayo County Council	094 906 4660
Meath County Council	1800 808 809
Monaghan County Council	1800 804 158
Offaly County Council	1800 818 181
Roscommon County Council	1800 200 727
Sligo County Council	1800 292 765
South Dublin County Council	1800 240519
Tipperary County Council	076 106 5000
Waterford City and County Council	1800 250 185
Westmeath County Council	1800 805 816
Wexford County Council	053 919 6000
Wicklow County Council	1800 868 399