



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
SINGAPORE

27 Jan 2020

**HEALTH ADVISORY FOR PERSONS
PLACED ON LEAVE OF ABSENCE (LOA)**

GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE 2019-NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

1. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases, such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The 2019-novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) has been identified to be the cause of severe pneumonia in China. The majority of cases have occurred in China, but cases have been exported to other countries and cities, including Singapore.
2. The Ministry of Health (MOH) has provided advisories for various sectors to implement leave of absences for employees, clients and students who have recently returned from mainland China. While not everyone who has travelled to China and other affected areas will be infected, the institution of a leave of absence will allow government agencies, institutions and employers to mitigate potential risks posed by travel in light of the rapidly evolving situation.
3. Persons who have been put on a leave of absence should stay at home and minimise close contact with others. They should monitor their health closely and seek medical attention if they develop any fever or symptoms of acute respiratory illness such as cough or shortness of breath.

WHAT MUST BE DONE DURING YOUR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

4. You should remain contactable at all times.
5. Remain in your place of residence as much as possible during your leave of absence.
6. Minimise visitors to your residence. You should maintain a record of persons you come into close contact with during your leave of absence.
7. You may leave your place of residence to purchase daily necessities or to attend to important personal matters. However, you should minimise your time spent in public spaces and contact with other individuals, and return to your place of residence as quickly as possible. If necessary, you may opt for home delivery services or enlist the assistance of others for your daily necessities.

8. You should avoid going to crowded places and attending social gatherings during your leave of absence.

CHECK FOR SYMPTOMS

9. Monitor yourself for fever (e.g. fever $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$) and respiratory symptoms such as cough and breathlessness.

10. If you develop fever, cough or breathlessness, or are feeling unwell, you should seek medical attention immediately at any outpatient clinic. Please inform the staff and doctor of your travel history. Wear a surgical mask (**Annex A**) before leaving your residence and avoid taking public transport.

11. In emergency situations (e.g. difficulty in breathing), you should call **995** for an ambulance to take you to hospital. Please inform the 995 operator of your travel history to mainland China.

12. You should update your employer or institution point-of-contact if you are unwell and that you are seeking medical attention.

OBSERVE GOOD PERSONAL HYGIENE

13. Maintain good personal hygiene, including hand washing with soap and water or use of alcohol-based hand rub.

14. Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing.

15. Maintain good indoor ventilation.

16. Avoid sharing food, crockery, utensils and other personal hygiene items.

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for persons under LOA

1. Am I under quarantine orders?

No, you are not under quarantine orders. You may leave your place of residence to attend to matters, but are strongly advised to minimise your time spent in public spaces.

2. Given that this is only an advisory, can I not comply to the guidelines stated?

Yes, but you are strongly advised to comply as a precautionary measure to prevent transmission of disease in your workplace, place of education, or to members of public.

3. Do I need to be on LOA immediately?

You are strongly advised to be placed on LOA immediately, to reduce transmission of disease in your workplace, place of education, or to members of public.

4. Can my family members continue to stay with me during this time? Are they at risk of infection?

Yes, your family members may continue to live with you. However, you and your family should observe good personal hygiene practices (refer to guidelines). If you become unwell, avoid contact with your family members and seek medical attention immediately.

5. What will happen if I am unwell? Will I be isolated if I turn out to be a confirmed case subsequently?

Seek medical attention if you are unwell. Please wear a surgical mask before leaving your residence and avoid taking public transport. Please inform the staff and doctor of your travel history. Your doctor will assess your health and may refer you to hospital if further assessment is necessary. If you are subsequently admitted and tested positive for novel coronavirus, you will be treated in an isolation room, until you are well enough to be discharged.

6. Where do I get the latest information on the disease situation?

Health advisories and latest information on the local disease situation are available on the Singapore Ministry of Health website at www.moh.gov.sg. For queries, please call the MOH general enquiry hotline at 6325 9220. For the latest global disease situation, you may wish to refer to information on the World Health Organisation website at www.who.int.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Employers

1. Does the requirement on the 14 days' leave of absence also apply to staff who have gone overseas to the Special Administrative Regions under China?

No, this advisory applies only to those travelled to Mainland China only.

2. Are persons in transit at airports in China excluded from this?

Travellers who transit in an airport in mainland China are not considered as having travelled to mainland China. Therefore, staff transiting in airports in China are excluded from this requirement.

3. Why do we start counting the 14 days' leave of absence only from the point when the staff returned to Singapore? Can I start to count from the point which they depart from Mainland China?

Employers can do so on case by case basis (e.g. if exact travel dates can be verified and tracked), but must ensure that there is at least 14 days from point of departure from Mainland China.

4. What should I do if there is no space or spare dormitories within my institution to segregate staff who have returned from Mainland China?

There is no need to segregate staff who have returned from mainland China. The leave of absence is intended to mitigate potential risks by minimising the time the individual spends at the workplace or educational institution. Instead, employers should monitor the health of those staff, and advise them to maintain good personal hygiene, and to seek medical attention if unwell.

5. Some of my staff stayed in the same room or flat as those who have just returned from Mainland China. Can they still report for work?

Yes, this advisory applies only to those travelled to Mainland China. Employers should monitor the health of their staff, and advise them to keep good personal hygiene and to seek medical attention if unwell.

6. What about staff who have family members or housemates who returned from China in the last 14 days and showed symptoms of fever, cough/cold. Is there any difference if there are no symptoms? Is there a need for declaration? And follow-up actions?

Individuals who have returned from China are advised to monitor their health and to seek medical attention if unwell. They should wear a surgical mask before leaving their residence and avoid taking public transport. They should inform the staff and doctor of their travel history. Employers should monitor the health of their staff, and advise them to keep good personal hygiene and to seek medical attention if unwell.

HOW TO WEAR A SURGICAL MASK

1. Unfold the pleats. Make sure they are **facing down**.
2. Place mask on your face with the non-absorbent side (blue or green) side facing outwards, with the metallic strip resting on your nose.
3. Apply elastic loops around the ears, or tie the strings behind your head and neck.
4. Apply the metallic strip securely over the bridge of the nose. Make sure it conforms to your nose.
5. Ensure that the mask fully covers the nose, mouth and is stretched gently over the chin. Make sure there are no gaps on either side of the mask.
6. Change mask if it becomes moist or damaged.