

#SafeRsexwork

The Sexual Health Centre's guide to working during the COVID-19 outbreak

The **#SafeRsexwork** campaign is a practical, step-by-step harm reduction guide for individuals undertaking sex work and escort work, during the COVID-19 outbreak. It is most advisable to take time off work if at all possible, in order to protect your health and prevent community transmission of the virus. If you can take time off work, please do. Emergency funds are available to those in need. If you are continuing to work, please follow this guide and avail of our support.

Your safety is always paramount.

COVID-19

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It is most advisable to take time off work during the COVID-19 outbreak if at all possible, in order to protect your health and prevent community transmission of the virus.

- Common symptoms of coronavirus include: a fever, a cough, and shortness of breath. Please note that some people carrying COVID-19 will be asymptomatic i.e. show no symptoms at all.
- Please follow the HSE guidelines on hand-washing and 'social distancing', which requires that you keep a space of 2 metres (6.5 feet) between you and other people. For more info: [hse.ie/coronavirus/](https://www.hse.ie/coronavirus/)
- It is important to avoid physical contact with anyone outside of your own household.
- If at all possible, work online rather than meeting clients. If working online, clean your hands and all devices properly and frequently. If sharing laptops, cameras etc. with other workers, encourage co-workers to disinfect devices at the start and end of every session.
- If you are having sex, it is vital to use a condom and/or dental dam, as STI testing services are currently limited.
- You can call or email us to have FREE condoms sent to you by post so that you can #stayathome.
- If possible, print the HSE posters from the links below, to inform clients of health and safety requirements.
Prevention of COVID-19 transmission: [hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/](https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/)
Drug use advice during COVID-19: [drugs.ie/images/uploads/drug_advice.png](https://www.drugs.ie/images/uploads/drug_advice.png)
Drug-related harm reduction: [drugs.ie/images/uploads/harm_reduction.PNG.png](https://www.drugs.ie/images/uploads/harm_reduction.PNG.png)
Overdose and CPR awareness: [drugs.ie/resources/covid/overdose_awareness_during_covid_19_pandemic/](https://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/overdose_awareness_during_covid_19_pandemic/)

Supports for Sex Workers & Escorts

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- ■ The Sexual Health Centre offers support, advice and **free condom postal delivery**. Just tell us your postal address and ask for "the bag" - you do not have to identify as a sex worker/escort over the phone. A variety of condoms and a suitable quantity will be sent to you. Contact our helpline on 021-4276676 (Mon - Thurs 9am - 5.30pm / Fridays 9am - 2pm) or email info@sexualhealthcentre.com.
- ■ The Sexual Health Centre's community outreach worker Susan Walsh is here to support you. Contact susanwalsh@sexualhealthcentre.com or our helpline (021-4276676) to schedule a call with Susan. Zoom support sessions will be facilitated in partnership with SWAI - contact Susan for info.
- ■ The Escort Ireland-funded Hardship Fund can be applied for via:
The Ugly Mugs website: uglymugs.ie/covid-19/apply/
or The Sex Worker's Alliance Ireland, at the following link: forms.gle/daktabnkPW8MLREL9.
- ■ **Your safety is always paramount and you can contact An Garda Síochána if you are in danger.** Call 112 or 999 & ask for the Gardaí/ Police if you are in danger or have been the victim of a crime. For information on your rights as a sex worker & reporting a crime go to: sexworkersallianceireland.org/info-for-sex-workers/reporting-crime/.

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What counts as 'close contact' / contact to be avoided?

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☒ 15 minutes of face to face activity with < 2 metre distance.

☒ 2 hours together in a closed space without airflow.

☒ Avoid touching your face and your client's face, and kissing.

☒ Avoid oral sex if possible.

Otherwise, use a condom or dental dam and ensure that it remains secure. Flavoured condoms are available for FREE from the Sexual Health Centre . Call 021-4276676 or email info@sexualhealthcentre.com, ask for "the bag", and tell us your postal address. We'll do the rest. You do not need to identify as a sex worker or escort - if you mention "the bag", a suitable variety and quantity of condoms will be sent to you, free of charge.

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Risk Assessment

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It is most advisable to take time off work during the COVID-19 outbreak if at all possible, in order to protect your health and prevent community transmission of the virus.

Avoid meeting clients if you answer 'yes' to any of these questions.

- Do you have a fever, cough, cold or shortness of breath?
- Have you been in close contact with someone who has a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19?
- Are you in one of the at-risk groups as outlined by the HSE:
www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/at-risk-groups.html



- Do you have a chronic illness?
- Do you live with someone who is in one of the at-risk groups as outlined by the HSE?
- Have you recently been in a country that has a significant number of confirmed COVID-19 cases?

Screening Clients

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Avoid meeting any clients who fall into the categories listed below. Try to assess if clients have been adhering to HSE guidelines or putting themselves at risk of contracting COVID-19. Please note that many carriers of COVID-19 will be asymptomatic i.e. have no symptoms at all.

- Has travelled overseas or on a cruise in recent months.
- Has had any physical contact with someone who has a suspected/ confirmed case of COVID-19.
- Has a fever, cough, cold or shortness of breath.

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Preparing your work space

- Clean surfaces with soap & water, disinfectant or a dilute bleach solution.
- Wash your skin thoroughly with soap, in the shower.
- Prepare clean sheets & towels.
- Ensure you have condoms, (single-use) lube sachets and disposable fingercots/gloves.
- If using lube from a bottle, clean it thoroughly with soap & water to remove any lube from the outside of the bottle.

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When you meet your client

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At the start of the session, clarify what you will not do, due to COVID-19-related precautions.

- If the client has a fever, cough, cold or shortness of breath, ask them to leave.
- Ask the client to wash hands & face. You could also wash your hands to ease any anxiety the client may have.
- Tie your hair up to avoid contact with the client's face, hands or bodily fluids.



- Avoid touching your face and your client's face, and kissing.
- Wash your hands and face with soap & warm water after they leave.
- Wipe down door handles & surfaces in the work area with disinfectant after they leave.

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Precautions during sex

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- Avoid kissing.
- Avoid touching your face & your client's face if possible. Otherwise use clean gloves, to be carefully removed & disposed of afterwards.
- Avoid oral sex if possible. Otherwise, use a condom or dental dam and ensure that it remains secure.
- Wash sex toys & equipment with soap & water and dry with a clean/paper towel before and after use.
- Use condoms throughout, including condom use for oral sex & dental dams for rimming.
- Prioritise positions where you or your client are face-down, to minimise shared breathing space.
- Masturbation of client can be carried out while standing behind them i.e. no face-to-face contact.

Additional precautions for your own workspace

- Have wipes within reach of the bed/workspace.
- Wash hands after touching money.
- Ask client to wash their hands after they have handled their wallet.
- Remind your client of the required 20 seconds for hand-washing time.
- Between jobs, change any blankets, sheets etc.
- Frequent hand-washing, particularly after handling clothing, is crucial. Viral droplets can live in clothing, so when undressing, you could be touching the droplets and then transmitting the virus by touching a surface.

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Additional precautions for other locations (street, outcall etc.)

- ☒ Use hand sanitiser on hands. Use a sanitising wipe on your face, or bring a bottle of water with soap in it (ideally use hot water, if available).
- ☒ Use hand sanitiser after using a car /door handle. Clean the handle with a wipe.
- ☒ Between jobs, change any blankets, sheets etc. Viral droplets can live in clothing and on surfaces, so frequent hand washing, particularly after handling clothing and equipment, is crucial.

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Precautions to take after each client

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- Disinfect door handles, elevator buttons, showers, taps, toilet flushers and light switches.
- Wash sex toys, lube tubes, BDSM equipment, etc. with soap & water and dry with a clean/paper towel.
- Thoroughly wash all fabrics that have been touched, in hot water on a long cycle. Use gloves when handling fabrics.
- If possible, wash hands after handling money and spray money with sanitiser or other disinfectant.
- Do not reuse towels, bedsheets or pillowcases.
- Have a thorough shower, change your clothes and wash your hands.

The Sexual Health Centre is here for you

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It is most advisable to take time off work during the COVID-19 outbreak if at all possible. Whether you can take time off or not, we are here to support you.

- You may be facing more uncertainty and pressure now, than ever before. Please contact our outreach worker Susan Walsh if you require support or advice - you can email susanwalsh@sexualhealthcentre.com or call 021-4276676.

- The following wellbeing resources may be useful to you:

Wellbeing:

hauoralife.com/s/Covid-19-Wellbeing-Resource_Hauora.png

Sleeping Pattern:

hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/healthy-ireland/community-healthcare-organisations/managing-my-sleep-psyched.pdf

Calming Practices:

hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/healthy-ireland/community-healthcare-organisations/finding-calm-psyched.pdf

Dealing with distress:

hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/healthy-ireland/community-healthcare-organisations/covid-19-coping-with-distress-staff-personal-psychosocial-guide-in-responding-to-covid-19-19032020-final.pdf