

29 Apr 2020

## **COVID-19 (coronavirus): advice for Humanitarian Aid workers**

### **Advice for UK humanitarian aid workers deployed overseas during COVID-19 pandemic**

The World Health Organization and United Nations have launched the COVID-19 Humanitarian Relief Plan [1]. Leading international humanitarian aid agencies will play an important role in this response and aid workers from the United Kingdom are being deployed overseas to help during the crisis [1, 2].

If you are a humanitarian aid worker and deployment abroad is considered essential, follow the FCO advice: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) essential international travel guidance](#).

### **Before you go**

- Check you are in-date for all routine vaccines as [recommended in the UK](#) (including MMR and any other [vaccines recommended for healthcare workers](#)).
- Check our [Country Information pages](#) for advice on destination-specific travel vaccines, malaria risk and recommendations for malaria prevention and other risks.
- **See our [humanitarian crisis factsheet](#) for further general advice.**

If appropriate, you should contact your occupational health team, health and safety officer/department, and your own healthcare provider/s, for advice specific to you and your role. Ensure you are fit for your deployment, discuss any health concerns with your occupational health department and establish what medical support is available to you at your destination.

### **COVID-19**

Make sure you are familiar with your deploying organisation's assessment and guidance regarding your risk of COVID-19. This should include their COVID-19 mitigation strategy for workers, any appropriate training, and the protective measures they have in place, including personal protective equipment (PPE) provision, at your destination.

Public Health England (PHE) has specific guidance on [COVID-19: infection prevention and control](#) and [COVID-19: guidance for health professionals](#) which includes recommendation on [appropriate PPE use](#).

### **Whilst you are there**

Be aware of your personal safety and follow your deploying organisation's destination specific security recommendations at all times. You should contact your healthcare provider urgently for medical attention if you become unwell.

To reduce the risk of [COVID-19 infection](#), you should take prevention measures which include:

- Maintaining good hand and personal hygiene. Wash hands regularly with soap and water or alcohol based disinfectant gel before handling or consuming food.

- Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms, or who appears unwell.
- Avoid sharing personal items.
- Follow guidelines on social distancing measures which may be in place.

To reduce the risk of passing coronavirus to others, anyone with respiratory symptoms should:

- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with a tissue or flexed elbow.
- Use paper tissues only once and dispose of them carefully, then clean hands with soap and water or alcohol based disinfectant gel.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home and work environment.
- Should a mask be worn, all the recommended precautions in order to minimise the risk of transmission should still be used.

Follow good food and water hygiene.

If appropriate to the country you are working in, follow insect bite avoidance measures.

If you are deployed to a malaria risk country, be aware of the symptoms of malaria and the need for prompt treatment.

Follow the **ABCD** of malaria prevention:

- **A**wareness of malaria risk
- **B**ite prevention
- **C**hemoprophylaxis - appropriate antimalarials and compliance with regime
- **D**iagnosis - prompt diagnosis and treatment without delay

## When you return to the UK

See our [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic advice for those returning from abroad](#) for the current recommendations on avoiding infection during your journey and the preventive measures you need take on your return to the UK. Guidance is subject to change.

**Humanitarian aid workers who travel** to the UK from areas affected by Ebola should be risk assessed by PHE as part of the [Ebola: returning workers scheme](#)

## Returning from a malaria risk region

If you return from malaria risk areas and are ill, you must seek urgent medical advice. Inform the health professional you have travelled to a malaria risk area in the last six months. In the current emergency, please be aware that if you have returned from a malarious area in the last six months and have a fever, you need an urgent malaria test (malaria film) on the **same day** you develop a fever.

If you have a fever, you can phone NHS 111 for advice, stating you have returned from a malaria area and need a malaria film. They will advise how you can travel safely to your local A&E department for this test to be carried out urgently [3].

## Advice for health professionals

Guidance on the management of cases and close contacts can be found in Public Health England's [COVID-19: investigation and initial clinical management of possible](#) cases guidance. All those being

assessed for possible COVID-19 must be asked if they have travelled abroad in the last six months. If their itinerary included a malaria risk country, they must have a blood test result for malaria on the same day [3].

## Resources

- [COVID-19: resources](#)
- [Global Humanitarian Response Plan: COVID-19 \(April – December 2020\)](#)
- [Interagency Standing Committee: Covid-19 outbreak readiness and response](#)
- [Interagency Standing Committee: Interim Briefing Note Addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Aspects of COVID-19 Outbreak](#)
- [NHS: Advice for everyone - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Public Health England: Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance](#)
  
- [COVID-19 - Reliefweb](#)

## References

1. [United Nations. Launch of Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19. New York. 25 March 2020. \[Accessed 30 April 2020\]](#)
2. [Department of International Development. UK leads global fight to prevent second wave of coronavirus. 12 April 2020. \[Accessed 30 April 2020\]](#)
3. [TravelHealthPro. Malaria reminder during COVID-19 pandemic. 19 March 2020. \[Accessed 30 April 2020\]](#)