



Guidance for members on the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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The government is stepping up the measures it has in place to tackle the spread of Coronavirus, and is asking us all to do the same.

There is understandably heightened anxiety amongst members and patients at this time, and questions that need to be addressed about what is safe practice in these exceptional circumstances.

There are sources of information that members can make use of in thinking about these questions and we advise all members to keep up to date with the latest advice from the Government which is [available here](#).

Many members working in NHS Trusts will need to work to the Trust's guidelines.

Both government and Trust guidance may be changing on a daily basis and it is essential that members keep up to date with the latest advice.

We also encourage all our members to use their professional judgement and assess risk in order to fulfil their duty of care to patients and themselves.

In these circumstances, members may need to introduce changes to their usual practice, in order to care for and ensure the safety of patients, bearing in mind that some patients will have physical health conditions as well as their mental health difficulties.

They should do so in a way that is informed by the relevant guidance and the values and principles of the profession and our professional standards. Our Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics states that "patients' welfare and best interests are paramount", and questions relating to Member conduct will always be considered in the context of the situation. Members need to work cooperatively with colleagues to keep people safe, to practice in line with the most up to date guidance from government, to recognise and work within the limits of their competence, and, if in independent practice, to have appropriate indemnity arrangements.

The [NHS guidance on coronavirus](#) provides information on what you can do to prevent the spread of the virus and actions to take if you have any symptoms. This guidance also provides advice if you have recently travelled to a country with cases of the coronavirus, or if a colleague or patient informs you that they have done so. Look online for advice, or call the NHS 111 phone line if you need medical help.

Members should reduce the risk of transmission by:

- Washing their hands before and after seeing patients and staying an appropriate distance from patients whenever possible.

- Considering how they might ensure that patients wash their hands when they arrive.
- Considering how to reduce the risk of transmission through surfaces that can be touched, including temporary suspension of shared, or possibly any toys.

It is advisable to consider planning with patients for the possibility that you or your patient becomes affected by the virus. The plan should be discussed with the patient or their parents, and should bear in mind that the discussion could raise anxiety in someone who is already fragile. It could include the following:

- How you will communicate and update your patients if you contract the virus, or have any reason to think you might have done so?
- What your patients should do if they experience symptoms of the virus, or think there is a risk they might have contracted it?
- The possibility and security of alternative means for the therapy, for example telephone or online.
- A plan for the possible eventuality that you are unable to provide face to face therapy or alternatives.

Advice for health professionals can be found [here](#). This includes advice relating to clinical and non-clinical settings, such as schools.

Advice for businesses and employers can be found [here](#).

Please be assured that the ACP is taking the developing coronavirus situation seriously and we understand the pressures on members and concerns it may be raising. We are monitoring advice from government and other professional bodies and will contact you further if new or different guidance is necessary.

In addition, the ACP office is putting plans in place to enable virtual working, to ensure that we can go on supporting members.

Kind regards,

Isobel Pick
Chair on behalf of the ACP Board