

## Equipment Guidance

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These notes are intended to provide a framework for a return to diving following easing of government restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance is based on current knowledge and understanding of the risks associated with the outbreak and the current scientific evidence informing decisions by government and other relevant authorities. It is acknowledged that the evidence base and knowledge surrounding the outbreak is rapidly and continually evolving and so the guidance will be reviewed regularly and be subject to update and amendment as appropriate.

### STATUS

Currently in the UK different criteria applies within each of the devolved administrations. Please refer to the [STATUS document](#).

### Protecting others and reducing the demands on the NHS

Current advice on avoiding transmission of the virus can be found on the Government Website. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

**The advice for anyone in any setting is to follow these main guidelines:**

- The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of a new continuous cough and/or high temperature. If you have these symptoms, however mild, stay at home and do not leave your house for 7 days from when your symptoms started (if you live alone), or 14 days (if you live with someone who has symptoms). You do not need to call NHS 111 to go into self-isolation. If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days, contact [NHS 111 online](#). If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.
- Wash your hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and hot water, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose, or after being in public areas where other people are doing so. Use hand sanitiser if that's all you have access to.
- To reduce the spread of germs when you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or your sleeve (not your hands) if you don't have a tissue, and throw the tissue in a bin immediately. Then wash your hands or use a hand sanitising gel.
- Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces using your regular cleaning products to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

**Anyone displaying any symptoms should NOT engage in any activity outside the home.**

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### COVID-19 virus survival time

The coronavirus will not survive indefinitely outside of a host organism. The survival time on different surfaces varies depending on the nature of the surface.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is stable for several hours to days in aerosols and on surfaces, according to a new study from National Institutes of Health, CDC, UCLA and Princeton University scientists in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. The scientists found that severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) was detectable in aerosols for up to three hours, up to four hours on copper, up to 24 hours on cardboard and up to two to three days on

plastic and stainless steel. The results provide key information about the stability of SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19 disease, and suggests that people may acquire the virus through the air and after touching contaminated objects.

<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/new-coronavirus-stable-hours-surfaces>

The use of heat, disinfectant and other cleaning agents can be effective in reducing contamination.

### **Equipment maintenance**

Equipment should be maintained and serviced in line with the manufacturer's recommendations and relevant local testing procedures for cylinders.

### **Equipment cleaning and care**

Equipment should be cleaned and cared for in line with the manufacturer's recommendations. The use of inappropriate cleaning agents or procedures may lead to injury to the diver or damage to the equipment. During this period increased risks from COVID-19 additional precautions may be considered to include any personal equipment that is intended for use by another diver in an emergency (AS and BC mouthpieces) can additionally be soaked in a suitable disinfectant solution for 10 minutes. Appropriate chemical solutions recommended for use in rebreathers would be suitable but must ensure it is diluted as directed. Examples include Chemgene, Trigene/Distel etc. If owners are concerned this might impact on the equipment they should contact the manufacturer for advice. Where a recommended cleaning agent is used it is important to rinse thoroughly and agitate vigorously with fresh water.

### **Personal equipment**

Divers who own their own equipment should ensure it is maintained in line with the manufacturers' recommendations and is cleaned and stored to minimise any risk of contamination. Prior to handling equipment they should take routine measures as advised to reduce the spread of infection by washing their hands thoroughly with soap and warm water or where washing is not possible use a suitable alcohol based hand sanitiser and avoid touching your face.

During this period increased risks from COVID-19 additional precautions may be considered to include any personal equipment that is intended for use by another diver in an emergency (AS and BC mouthpieces) can additionally be soaked in a suitable disinfectant solution for 10 minutes. Any equipment soaked in disinfectant solution should be thoroughly rinsed in fresh water before further use and allowed to air dry thoroughly before storage. If owners are concerned this might impact on the equipment they should contact the manufacturer for advice. The owner should avoid touching any mouthpiece that is intended to be used by another diver in an emergency.

### **Club equipment**

All club equipment accessible to more than one member at any time should be carefully controlled. It should be allocated to just one member for the duration of a training session. During this period of increased risks from COVID-19 additional precautions may be considered to include Regulator and BC mouthpieces, and other equipment that has been subject to direct inhalation and/or exhalation during use, should be soaked in a suitable disinfectant solution for 10 minutes. Any equipment soaked in disinfectant solution should be thoroughly rinsed in fresh water before further use and allowed to air dry before storage. If owners are concerned this might impact on the equipment they should contact the manufacturer for advice.

If possible for students under training or divers on a dive trip each should be allocated equipment for their sole use during each training session or for the duration of the trip.

## **Hire equipment**

Dive centres hiring equipment for use should be able to demonstrate to divers hiring the equipment how it is maintained, cleaned and disinfected as necessary between users. There should be a clear protocol for rinsing, cleaning and storing the equipment following use. It is possible that some centres hiring equipment may allocate a set of equipment to individuals for their sole use for the duration of their trip to avoid cross contamination between divers.

## **Breathing gases**

The process of compressing gases generates heat during the compression process that should kill any virus inadvertently to enter the air intakes. Helium and oxygen supplies for producing gas mixes should be from a reputable source for breathing gases.

Consequently, the gas in your diving cylinder should remain safe to breathe. The greatest potential for transmission of the virus is through surface contact around the top of the cylinder and pillar valve. Compressor operators, people transporting cylinders and those assembling scuba sets should avoid touching or otherwise contaminating the outlet of the cylinder or the first stage of the regulator that connects to it.

## **Regulators**

It is essential that manufacturers guidelines are followed when considering any means of disinfecting regulators. Any chemical that could interact with the moving parts, valves and perishable components within the regulator could interfere with the working and/or performance. If owners are concerned this might impact on the equipment they should contact the manufacturer for advice.

## **Rebreathers**

Rebreathers form a loop as an extension of your breathing system allowing your own exhaled gas to be scrubbed of CO<sub>2</sub>, depleted oxygen to be replaced and a replenished breathing gas provided back to the diver. Providing the rebreather is not shared with another diver then normal disinfecting processes, as detailed by the manufacturer and the training programme for the unit should keep the rebreather safe to use.

The sharing of a rebreather, for example in Try Dives, should be avoided and the breathing loop should be disinfected, rinsed thoroughly and fully air dried (72 hours in a warm dry environment) between users to ensure that the risk of transmission of any virus is prevented. (**see also**

## **Training Guidance**)

Cleaning agents – rebreather manufacturers will advise on the types of disinfectant agents that would be appropriate to sanitise the breathing loop. Some may also advise on the types of agent that **MUST NOT** be used as they could be detrimental to the equipment). Appropriate chemical solutions recommended for use in rebreathers include Chemgene HLD4D, Trigene/Distel etc diluted as directed.

## **BCs**

Mouthpieces can be sterilised in a similar manner and using similar agents to rebreathers.

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To be used in conjunction with other guidance including:

- Medical guidance
- Status
- Equipment guidance
- Shore diving
- CPR and rescue procedures

- Diver Training
- Travel Guidance
- Charter boat diving
- RIB diving
- Swimming pool usage
- Etc.