

Medical Guidance

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.

Medical Advice

In the UK BSAC and other UK based organisations are advised on medical matters by the UK Diving Medical Committee (UK DMC). Currently the UK DMC is actively formulating their advice on COVID-19 and the requirements for returning to safe diving activity. It should be noted that currently the medical evidence regarding the virus and its effects is incomplete and the subject of substantial research worldwide.

Medical fitness to Dive

When we get back into diving we will want to do so safely. One critical consideration is that if you have been confirmed to have had COVID-19 you should seek advice from a UK DMC medical referee to ensure you are safe to resume diving. Their advice is likely to take account of the

severity of any symptoms, the treatment you have received and the level of recovery.

The UK DMC medical form already has the following questions:

6 Have you ever had any other chest or lung disease or problems?

19 Are you currently receiving medical care or have you consulted a doctor in the last year other than for trivial issues e.g. common cold, infection or minor injury?

Anyone who has suffered significant symptoms of COVID-19 is likely to have experienced chest and/or lung problems and so would be required to answer 'Yes' to question 6 and so need to consult a Medical Referee before returning to diving.

Anyone who has received medical care for the condition would have to answer 'Yes' to question 19 (and potentially 6 as well).

Anyone who has been tested for COVID-19 (because they are in a health care or other essential service) and tested positive but not seen a doctor or received medical care may not need to answer 'Yes' to any specific question. However, the current concern is that they might have sustained some risk of damage to the lungs or other organs. In all cases the advice of the UK DMC is that the diver should discuss their specific case with a medical referee before returning to diving.

The potential long term effects of COVID-19

At this, relatively early, stage the evidence is far from clear or well established and is continuing to develop.

Novel Corona Virus (SARS-CoV-2) infection (COVID-19) can manifest itself with various clinical syndromes, ranging from no symptoms, over a flu-like syndrome, to severe pulmonary compromise (ARDS - Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome) and cardiac symptoms (cardiomyopathy). Factors that determine the severity of COVID-19 symptoms are but incompletely known: older persons, suffering from other medical conditions, are an obvious group at risk; however, there are numerous cases reported of young, previously healthy persons in whom the disease has had a sudden and dramatic evolution.

It has been suggested that, where the symptoms were mild and improve within a week to complete resolution, the risk for permanent damage to heart or lungs is very low. However, we currently have no data about the long term complications as SARS-CoV-2 is a new disease. It will take time before the potential impact on individual health, and any lasting effects on lung or heart function, are captured in the peer-reviewed literature.

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.