

Snorkelling 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.

Ensure you are not showing any symptoms of Coronavirus (temperature, cough, difficulty breathing, or loss of smell and/or taste).

At the height of the pandemic significant social distancing rules were in place as a legal requirement. Thanks to significant measures applied to control the spread, including the vaccination programme, most restrictions on group size and social distancing have been removed. The following guidance provides advice on appropriate safety precautions that can still be taken to help ensure the safety of all persons engaged in these activities.

The best initial precaution is for all divers to check their own medical condition and consider the use of lateral flow testing prior to departure and not travel if testing positive or showing symptoms.

Travel to site

Unless already resident on the location of a dive site access will undoubtedly involve some form of travel to the site. **See separate Travel Guidance.**

Risk Assessment

All members of the dive party should conduct their own risk assessments for the event in the normal manner. In addition consideration must be given to the impact of any factors associated with the risks of transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

Dive Management

During the preparatory stages and prior to divers assembling at the dive site or meeting place the Dive Manager should confirm that each individual is fit and well and that if they are or become unwell at any time they should not attend. If necessary they may need to remind them to self-isolate if they have any of the symptoms of COVID-19 and seek further medical advice.

Dive planning safety measures during initial dives:

- Remain within your existing levels of competence and confidence
- Build up the distance covered and depth progressively
- Do not dive in strong currents where risk of separation is increased
- Avoid diving in marginal conditions or remote locations

Equipment preparation

Personal diving equipment remains the responsibility of the individual diver. Each snorkeller should use their own equipment and not share with others. Masks and snorkels in particular should not be shared.

Emergency equipment such as O2 sets, AED and First Aid kits should be checked for function as normal. Preparatory checks on mouthpieces, oro-nasal masks and pocket masks should avoid breathing from them to minimise the risk of contamination. After checking, all surfaces touched should be disinfected using appropriate wipes and allowed to dry fully before packing away. If not already included, rescue equipment should be supplemented with protective equipment:

- Face shields or other barriers for protection of casualty and rescuers
(**see separate guidance on CPR**)
- Gloves
- Antiseptic wipes
- Alcohol based hand sanitiser

Briefing

Briefing of a snorkel group by the Snorkel Dive Manager (SDM) should continue to be conducted. The briefing should include any additional specific risks relating to precautions to manage and control the risks associated with avoiding the transmission of COVID-19. This includes ensuring appropriate social distancing by those attending the briefing. It may be appropriate to conduct a series of briefings to smaller groups to ensure this.

Discussion of a dive plan between a buddy pair can be completed as normal whilst maintaining appropriate social distancing or wearing a mask as indicated by their personal risk assessment.

Kitting up/assistance

Some tasks may not be possible to complete alone. Closing a wetsuit or drysuit zip across the back for example. If assistance must be provided it is recommended that:

- The equipment is prepared in advance by the diver
- The assistance is for as brief a time as possible
- With children, wherever possible, a member of the same household assists

- The assistant/buddy does not touch any part of the equipment that would be breathed from directly by anyone
- During assistance both participants wear a surgical face mask or half mask whilst within 2m of each other as a means of limiting exposure
- Both position themselves so that neither is directly downwind of the other

* Use of protective masks (**see separate guidance**)

Buddy Checks

A buddy check remains an essential safety procedure for snorkelling. Checks can be completed as normal with the buddy pair positioned appropriately. As long as separation can be maintained there should be no requirement to wear a mask or snorkel, or conduct the checks without talking. When demonstrating oral inflation of a snorkelling vest, contact with mouth or hands on the mouthpiece should be avoided.

Dive procedures

Where possible during water entry, exit and surface swimming divers should maintain an appropriate personal distancing. Breathing through the snorkel discharges exhaled air into the immediate environment where it is likely to be dispersed provided snorkelers are reasonably separated.

Choose a place for entry and exit where the shore and seabed are flat and even, and do not require support from another snorkeller to assist with entry and exit.

Clearing the snorkel of water by using the blow method (forceful exhalation) will generate droplets and aerosol from the snorkel into the local environment. If a snorkeller is infected with the virus, this may result in virus transmission. There is no specific evidence to indicate how far blow clearing of a snorkel may disperse the virus. Evidence from research into sneezes and coughs indicates projection beyond 2m. However, the majority of research relates to enclosed environments such as shops and aircraft cabins. In the research models dispersal has been from 1-2m height. When ejected from a snorkel, with the end of the tube just above the water the range is likely to be much less.

The displacement technique for clearing a snorkel is less likely to disperse droplets and aerosol into the atmosphere.

Post Dive debrief

Reporting of dive details to the Snorkel Dive Manager or assistant can be completed as normal whilst maintaining appropriate distancing.

Discussion of a dive between a buddy pair can be completed as normal whilst maintaining appropriate distancing

Debriefing of a dive group by the Snorkel Dive Manager should continue to be conducted ensuring appropriate social distancing by those attending the briefing. With larger groups of divers it may be appropriate to conduct a series of debriefing to smaller groups to ensure this.

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.