

29th September 2021.

Dear Employer,

Subject: Support for the medically vulnerable in returning to the workplace

We would like to thank you, as an employer, for your work throughout the pandemic in supporting staff and members of the public, who are at a higher risk than the average person of severe illness and death from Covid-19.

Whilst the majority of the population are welcoming the gradual opening up of society, many of the medically vulnerable are very anxious about the next steps. This is why we are asking you to continue highlighting the importance of COVID-19 safety measures in your workplace – especially to your staff who may be at a higher risk such as the immune-compromised (organ transplant recipients for example).

Individuals who may have reduced protection from vaccination

Although the vaccine rollout has been very successful, with over five million doses administered already, there are concerns over the efficacy of the vaccines amongst certain cohorts of the medically vulnerable – particularly those with a compromised immune system such as organ transplant recipients.

To date, there is no reliable measure of the efficacy of a COVID-19 vaccine at an individual level. However, recent research released looking at the antibody response to the vaccines amongst organ transplant recipients is showing that collectively they have a significantly lower response than the general public. We understand a 3rd additional vaccination shot is being planned for organ transplant recipients.

Keeping your workforce safe

Many of our immune compromised members (transplant recipients) have told us they are worried that their needs will be forgotten as the general population return to something more like normal life. The return to the workplace is of particular concern.



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We are asking that you address this concern in your workplace by offering individualised risk assessments, when appropriate, and making adjustments for your staff as necessary.

The HSE's Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) offers useful guidance on their website www.hpsc.ie.

Key points include:

Risk assessments

Comprehensive and individualised [risk assessments](#), informed by medical advice where appropriate, which are monitored and adjusted in light of changes such as fluctuating local prevalence, new variants of concern and data about vaccine protection.

Safety best practice

- Emphasising to the wider workforce the importance of continuing to stringently apply Covid-19 safety measures
- Ensuring good ventilation throughout the workplace
- Discussing and implementing reasonable adjustments such as flexible start times to avoid peak time travel on public transport, or moving away from public facing roles.

People at highest risk from COVID-19 are advised to continue working from home where possible, including after both vaccinations. This may entail flexibility from both sides in relation to their role.

People are keen to get back to their usual activities but to be safe while doing so. Individuals will have different views on what feels right for them, and some of your staff may have very legitimate concerns about their own ongoing risks from COVID-19. We hope this will be discussed during the risk assessment process and have significant bearing on decision making.



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Mental wellbeing support

We would also like to underline the potential mental health needs of staff at higher risk. Living with the threat of serious illness or death should they contract COVID-19 and in many cases having cocooned for over a year has placed a huge toll on the mental health of individuals at higher risk from the virus.

We recognise the huge amount of work done by employers throughout the pandemic and would like to thank you again for the ongoing support made available to vulnerable staff and their families.

Yours faithfully,

Carol Moore,
CEO | Irish Kidney Association



Gerry Scully,
Secretary, The Irish Heart and Lung Transplant Association, (IHLTA).



Ava Battles,
CEO, Multiple Sclerosis Ireland.



Covid-19 information:

www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/preventing-the-spread/returning-work-safely/



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