

COVID-19 – advice for ships and ship owners.

Sources of information

The Norwegian Centre for Maritime and Diving Medicine has developed an online, interactive tool to assist in the management of possible COVID-19 cases on board. This is freely available to all and can be found at www.covid19atsea.no.

There are many sources of information about COVID-19 and we would suggest the following sites:

World Health Organisation (WHO) <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

International Maritime Organisation <http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

These sites reference other sources of information from, for example, the International Chamber of Shipping, International Maritime Health Authority and the International Labour Organisation. The following summarises the main points from the information available at these websites.

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH) issues Norwegian policy and information. www.fhi.no

For NIS and NOR registered ships, the Norwegian Maritime Authority also have information on their website. www.sdir.no

Preventing the spread of COVID-19

There is currently no vaccine or known effective treatment against COVID-19. It is spread in the same way as a cold and flu illness and can be spread from the airways of an affected person in three ways:

- As droplets in the air from an infected cough or sneeze that then come into contact with the mucosa membranes in the eye, nose or mouth of other people close to the infected person.
- Through direct contact, for example, when the patient touches another person with virus on their hands.
- Through indirect contact when the virus is transferred by coughing/sneezing/touch of an infected person onto an object that is then touched by another person.

To prevent the spread of infection, avoid coughing or sneezing on others. Try to cough or sneeze into a paper towel that is thrown away immediately or, if this is not possible, cough or sneeze into a bent elbow. Avoid close contact (1 - 2 meters if possible) with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness and wash your hands regularly and thoroughly.

Proper hand washing by sick and healthy people is important to prevent transfer of the virus.

Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and hot water, especially after contact with others. Using appropriate hand sanitiser is a good alternative if hand washing is not possible. If your hands are dirty or wet, hand gels are less effective, and hand washing is preferred.

When to seek help on board

People on board who develop signs of respiratory disease, should contact the medical officer. Signs of respiratory infection include coughing, fever, sore throat, chest pain and difficulties breathing.

If required the medical officer can seek assistance from Radio Medico Norway.

Management of suspected coronavirus illness on board

- The patient should be isolated in the sickbay or in their own cabin. They should wear a medical facemask when in contact with other people.
- Make sure to observe the patient regularly (in person or by telephone) and monitor the development of the illness and the patient's condition.
- Contact with the patient should be limited to one or two other crew members. Anybody in contact with the patient should use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as facemask, apron or gown, gloves and goggles, when entering the patient's cabin. Make sure to follow advice on hand washing and wash hands immediately after leaving the patient's cabin.

- Initiate routines for the disinfection of surfaces that many people may touch, for example, mess areas, door handles, railings, toilet flush buttons, telephones, navigation panels etc.
- Laundry, eating utensils and garbage from the cabin of an isolated person must be treated as contaminated by the virus. Use gloves when handling these items and cover them when in transit to the washing machine/dishwasher/appropriate bin.

When going into port

- The Maritime Health Declaration must be completed and submitted according to usual procedures before entering a port.
- If illness due to COVID-19 is suspected on board, the port authorities must be informed and asked for instructions regarding the management of the patient. Guidance on how to manage contacts and other persons on board should also be requested.
- If there is suspected illness due to coronavirus on board, when entering a Norwegian port from abroad, the Norwegian Coastal Authorities must be notified at Tel. +47 78989898. For local instructions arriving to Norway, see [The Norwegian Coastal Administration - Corona information](#)

Crew changes

- When planning a change of crew, careful consideration of local and international travel advice is essential. Travel advice from the WHO is available here: [Travel advice \(WHO\)](#)
- Any planned crew change should be considered on an individual basis and subject to a thorough risk assessment by the ship and ship owner.
- Port authorities should be contacted regarding local regulations.
- For NIS registered vessels, complementary information can be found here [Norwegian Maritime Authorities - Corona outbreak](#). The general Norwegian quarantine regulations do not apply to NIS/NOR ships abroad.

Cruises along the Norwegian coastline

- For cruise vessels own rules applies when cruising along Norwegian coastline. For more information see: [Cruises along the norwegian coastline - covid 19](#)

Who can be contacted

- In case of suspected illness on board (world wide), contact Radio Medico Norway:
Inmarsat : 32 trough Eik earth station, Telephone : +47 51683601, E-Mail : advice@radiomedico.no
- For general questions relating to Corona virus in Norway. Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH).
+47 81555015. (Information service about Corona)
- For ships arriving in Norway with suspected Corona illness. Norwegian Coastal administration.
Tel. +47 78989898.
- For questions regarding crew change etc. for NIS/NOR registered ships. Norwegian Maritime Authority.
Tel. +47 52745000.