

Information on the coronavirus for clients of the Finnish Immigration Service

Coronavirus worldwide

According to the World Health Organization, the coronavirus outbreak is a pandemic. A pandemic is a disease that has spread all over the world. The risk of contagion is elevated in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

There is no specific medicine available to treat the new coronavirus, COVID-19. There is also no vaccine against the coronavirus. However, Finland has good potential to take care of those who do become ill.

Quarantine and exposure

Asylum seekers arriving from abroad will be provided with quarantine-like accommodation by the reception centre.

In quarantine-like accommodation, you must stay in the room/apartment or space given to you by the reception centre.

- You must not go into the common rooms at the reception centre.
- You must avoid close contact with other people. If you are living with your family, avoid close contact with people outside your family.
- You can go outside if you do not go near other people. You must not participate in any leisure activities, go to the shops, or use public transport, because close contact would be difficult to avoid.
- The staff at the centre will look after your basic needs (e.g. food and hygiene products).

If you go to stay in a private home outside the reception centre immediately when you arrive in the country, you must stay in that home under the same quarantine-like conditions. You will have to manage your own food and supplies with, for instance, the help of your family and friends.

You will also have to go into quarantine for two weeks if you are exposed to the coronavirus. If you have been in close contact with a person who has become ill with the coronavirus, then you have been exposed. If you know that you have been in close contact with a person who has become ill with the coronavirus, please inform the reception centre staff immediately. If you are staying outside the reception centre, please inform the staff by phone if possible.

The staff at the reception centre will give you information and instructions on quarantine.

How to stop the virus from spreading

Coronavirus is transmitted by touch and by coughing and sneezing. Everyone can do something to prevent the coronavirus from spreading.

Good hygiene is the best way to prevent the spreading of the coronavirus – and all other viruses too:

- Wash your hands carefully with soap and water. Do this often. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds every time. Dry your hands well.
- If you cannot wash your hands, use hand sanitiser.
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Use a handkerchief or your sleeve. Do not cough or sneeze into the palm of your hand. Always put your handkerchief in the rubbish.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth unless you have just washed your hands.
- Clean the screen of your phone regularly.
- Keep your room tidy.
- Do not make a mess in the common rooms of the centre.

Keep your distance from other people:

- If you are staying in a private home, stay there as much as possible.
- If you are staying at the reception centre, avoid the common rooms as much as possible.

- Do not shake hands with other people or embrace them. Think of other ways to greet people.
- Keep at least one metre away from other people, both at and outside the centre. Stay well away from anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid public places, crowds and gatherings.
- You can exercise outdoors if you keep your distance from other people.
- Do not visit other people in their homes; talk to them on the phone. You should especially avoid visiting elderly people (and people who have chronic illnesses).
- People over the age of 70 must stay in quarantine-like conditions. They must stay away from all close contact with other people as far as possible.

Manage only essential things at the reception centre:

- Do not book an appointment with a reception centre employee unless you really need to.
- If you are staying in a private home, do not come to the reception centre unless you really need to. You should mainly contact the centre by phone.

If you are ill and have symptoms, you should not go anywhere outside the reception centre:

- For instance, if you have an oral hearing at an administrative court about your asylum process coming up and you start to have symptoms, contact your legal counsel so that the hearing can be cancelled.
- If you have any other appointment coming up with an official or an authority outside the reception centre and you are not sure whether you can go because of how you are feeling, please contact the staff at the centre. If you are staying outside the reception centre, please contact the staff by phone if possible.

Changes to the operations of reception centres

- Reception centres are temporarily stopping functions that are not strictly necessary. The centres will continue to take care of basic everyday life and essential activities.
- The centres are discontinuing various meetings such as info briefings, study groups and clubs.
- The staff at the centre intend to organise meetings by remote connection so that they can protect you and themselves from disease.
- For the time being, visits by outsiders to reception centres are prohibited.
- Also, reception centres do not now transfer clients between centres unless absolutely necessary.

Coronavirus symptoms

The coronavirus causes an acute respiratory infection. Typical coronavirus symptoms are:

- breathing problems such as coughing or shortness of breath
- fever
- muscle ache
- fatigue

The symptoms are generally mild, but some people can develop serious symptoms. The coronavirus is generally more dangerous for people in at-risk groups; their symptoms are usually more severe. The at-risk groups include people over the age of 70 and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease.

If you fall ill and have symptoms, please inform the staff at the reception centre immediately. If you are staying outside the reception centre, please inform the staff by phone if possible.

If you are ill

If you have mild symptoms and do not belong to an at-risk group, then you do not necessarily need to be diagnosed by a physician.

If you have mild symptoms, stay in your apartment or room or any other space that may be shown to you by the staff at the centre. Mild symptoms include a blocked nose, coughing, a sore throat, muscle ache or fever. It is particularly important to stay away from other people and not go into the common rooms at the centre.

If you are ill, you need to get rest and drink enough fluids. You can use non-prescription medication to alleviate your symptoms (e.g. paracetamol). Respiratory infections usually get better with about a week of rest. Follow any care instructions that you are given.

Do not go to work if you are ill.

Tell the staff of the reception centre if:

- your symptoms continue for a long time
- your symptoms become more severe, and your condition becomes worse
- you experience shortness of breath

If you are staying outside the reception centre, please inform the staff by phone if possible. If you are staying outside the reception centre, your symptoms become more severe, and your condition suddenly worsens, you can call the emergency number: 112.

Isolation means separating a person with a contagious disease from healthy people. A doctor can order you to be put into isolation. In that case, you are not allowed to leave your residence, room, or other space assigned to you by the staff, unless you have permission. Isolation can also be done at a hospital. The purpose of isolation is to avoid further contagion.

If you are isolated in your room or other space assigned to you by the staff at the centre, the staff will provide you with food or supplies. If you are staying in a private home, you will have to manage your own food and supplies with, for instance, the help of your family and friends. Remember that you are not allowed to leave isolation or have any contact with other people.

What we are hoping for from you

We hope that all clients of the reception centre will be willing to co-operate, be patient, and stay calm. Follow all instructions given by the staff, for your safety and for the safety of others.

Where to find information

- The staff at the reception centre can give you information as needed.
- News about the coronavirus are broadcast on yle.fi in several languages.
- There is information on the situation in Finland at thl.fi (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare), along with instructions on coughing and washing hands, etc.