

Best Practice Guidelines for a Post Vaccination World

Mid-April 2021 has shown no extant cases of COVID-19 in residents in Gibraltar. Cases continue to be detected in people from outside of Gibraltar, especially with surges in linked countries. The high level of uptake of the Covid-19 vaccine in Gibraltar provides a significant layer of protection locally. People who are vaccinated will almost certainly not need hospital care. With the move to a more normal pattern of behaviour, one must remember that the risk is still present throughout most of the world. The responsibility for keeping safe is predominantly our own. We need to remember the following principles if we wish to maintain a safe return to normality:

Principle 1

Vaccinated people may carry the virus and may not experience any symptoms. It takes two weeks following a first dose of vaccination, for immunity to be established.

Principle 2

Vaccinated people may still pass on the virus to those that are not protected. The chances of passing it on are reduced between 50-80%, however, if someone is unvaccinated and catches the virus, they are still at risk of falling seriously ill.

Principle 3

We do not know whether vaccination has actually protected any particular individual. Around one in twenty people will not be fully protected despite vaccination.

Principle 4

The virus is mainly spread through aerosols, therefore masks, physical distancing and outside environments all contribute to the prevention of spread.

Principle 5

When we mix with people, we are also mixing with the people they have been in contact with in the previous 48 hours.

Principle 6

The risk of contracting Covid-19 is greater following contact with people from outside of Gibraltar, more so than anyone who lives or works here (and is also vaccinated).

Principle 7

You cannot tell who is vaccinated by looking at them!
Any unknown close contacts you have are potential sources of infection.

Principle 8

Screening remains important. Lateral flow tests can potentially identify anyone who is carrying the virus in their naso-pharyngeal passages. Frequency of testing should be considered in line with risk of exposure to higher risk contacts.

Principle 9

In order to break onward spread, we need to isolate close contacts. If you test positive for Covid-19 you will need to help the CTB identify any potentially close contacts. If you have been vaccinated, CTB will not normally require you to stay at home if you are a contact.

Principle 10

Some people cannot be vaccinated and we need to protect them.

Public Health Gibraltar therefore advises the following:

- A. Meeting in open outdoor spaces, wearing a mask, and being physically distant remains a great way to protect yourself, customers, clients, friends and family members.
- B. Maintaining some physical distance when greeting; shaking hands, kissing, hugging and close forms of endearment increase your exposure to viruses.
- C. Taking responsibility when hosting an event or occasion to ensure all guests are safe. We are all responsible for our own health and wellbeing, but as a host, you are also taking on the obligation and responsibility to protect others.
- D. Cleaning your hands regularly will protect you and others from germs. Do so, as often as you can. Use soap and water or 70% alcohol gel. Encourage guests to do the same.
- E. Taking note of those remain in close proximity to you. Providing honest details at a restaurant or social gathering for example, is a good way to ensure close contacts are quickly identified. Downloading the BeatCovid App is also advisable.
- F. Risk assess all and any events. The main issue of concern will be the mix of those people attending. If there are significant numbers of people present, or expected to attend, who come from outside Gibraltar, it is important to consider that they may not be vaccinated or that they might be incubating/ carrying the virus. The size of the group and the density of the setting must be considered alongside other precautions.

HOLDING AN EVENT e.g. a birthday party, wedding or celebration, or formal meeting.

Consider the makeup of the guest/attendance list. This is the area where there is greatest control. If people come from outside Gibraltar:

- a. and comprise of less than 10% of the people present, then you should be safe to assume that normal behaviour applies for everyone present.
- b. or they make up to a third of the people present, then you may wish to consider asking them to wear a mask for normal activity, and/or supplement that with a negative same day lateral flow test
- c. or they make up more than a third of your attendance list, you may wish to follow the guidance below but also consider adding another layer of protection (such as controlling the layout of the room to prevent excessive mixing).
- d. but if you are unable to identify where they may have come from (e.g. performers, officers or servers), potentially from a country undergoing a surge of

COVID-19 cases, ask them to take extra precautions or isolate them from others. Supplement precautions with a prerequisite lateral flow test.

- e. you will need to keep a list of all those attending your event, with valid contact numbers for contact tracing purposes. These records must be held for two weeks and then destroyed. Names such as “Mickey Mouse” help no-one.

Where you cannot predict the composition of visitors, clients or customers to your event, it is safer to assume that there will be significant numbers of people from outside of Gibraltar. Best practice is then to apply the three-layers of protection. Allow entry to those who:

- 1) Are within 180 days of having had COVID-19, or
- 2) Have had at least one dose of the vaccine more than two weeks previously, or
- 3) Have had a negative same-day lateral diffusion test

You will need to have some way of verifying that the above apply.
Encourage everyone to clean their hands with gel frequently.

Where there is uncontrolled access, such as shops, the safest way to protect clientele is for everyone present to wear a mask and practice good hand hygiene.

Each institution, organisation or business is responsible for undertaking a risk assessment in relation to COVID-19 for its customers and or employees. Advice can be obtained from Civil Contingencies or Public Health Gibraltar.

Covid-19 risk assessments should be reviewed on a regular basis and must take in to consideration any changes to the present situation; for example, the introduction of new vaccines, new variants and/or visitors to Gibraltar. Those who are remain unvaccinated continue to be at risk, and this may be due to medical or others reasons. It is important to endeavour to consider and accommodate their needs without pressure.

IN THE WORKPLACE

Many people work in office-based environments. Amongst those that are immunised normal social interactions should be enabled, in the context of greater awareness of hand hygiene. Social distancing is not required for these staff interactions & workplace settings.

The safety of staff is now based on protecting the *non-vaccinated* given the general high levels of vaccine uptake within Gibraltar. The employer has a duty of care to ascertain who is not immunised and put in extra measures to protect them. This may change on a regular basis, and needs to also account for future developments (such as a booster). Those vaccinated with one dose have less protection than those with two doses.

Non-vaccinated staff will continue to need to be protected by social distancing, regular hand-washing as well as the need to wear masks in areas where they are mixing indoors with colleagues who, inadvertently and despite being immunised, may be carrying the virus. These areas might include toilets, rest areas or canteens.

Where an employer has a group of such staff, it might consider working with them collectively.

It is important not to stigmatise anyone for their decision, and also understand that for some, it is a matter of faith rather than evidence. Employers will wish to support employees to find their own path to vaccination, but in the longer term, extra precautions for these staff need to be included in policies such as flexible working.

WORKPLACE COUNTERS

This is where members of staff interact with members of the public. Where there are partitions between both sets, then the staff need not normally wear masks. Small gaps in partitions, including perforations should not create any additional risks. Where the public are congregating in numbers in a small area, they should be encouraged to wear a mask, particularly if it is likely that people from outside Gibraltar are present.

A business should risk assess its own areas and determine whether it is appropriate to encourage the public to wear masks or not, based on its experience of its own customers. It is responsible for the positioning and presentation of appropriate signage.