



UNITED GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND

An official communication from the United Grand Lodge of England

Thursday 5 March 2020

Dear Sir/Brethren,

Please see below a statement from **Dr David Staples** (Grand Secretary & CEO of United Grand Lodge of England), **Ryan Williams** (Grand Secretary at Mark Masons' Hall) and **Dr G R E Shilson** (Grand Secretary General of the Ancient and Accepted Rite) on the Coronavirus.

Please click below to see the statement in full.

CORONAVIRUS – MEMBER UPDATE FROM UGLE, MMH and SC

A joint statement from the Grand Secretary / Grand Scribe E
Grand Secretary at Mark Masons' Hall
Grand Secretary General of the Ancient and Accepted Rite

As the Coronavirus continues to escalate, we are issuing the following urgent guidance above and beyond that issued by Public Health England. This is due to the main age demographic of our membership being in a significantly higher risk group. This advice equally applies to members of the Orders administered from Mark Masons' Hall and members of the Ancient and Accepted Rite.

COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China in December 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO) believes COVID-19 **more severely affects older people and those with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease or diabetes).**

Based on the WHO's declaration that this is a public health emergency of international concern, the UK Chief Medical Officers have raised the risk to the UK from low to moderate. On 10 February, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, announced strengthened legal powers to protect public health, and on the 2 March outlined the UK's national response to the virus.

Whilst each unit may decide for itself what precautions it may wish to take, UGLE strongly suggests you follow this advice:

- **If you or a family member are showing signs of illness, please do not attend your Lodge or Chapter meetings and follow the guidance below.**
- **We recommend that members consider refraining from any physical contact within the ceremonies, before or after meetings. Given the tactile nature of many ceremonies, if you or candidates are concerned about how they can take place with little or no physical contact, while maintaining their meaning and impact, you may even wish to consider postponing the ceremony until the situation has improved.**
- **Minimise mass shared transport (i.e. coaches) to meetings.**
- **Wash hands thoroughly before and after meetings for 20 seconds with hot water.**
- **This advice stands whether you do or do not wear gloves during your ceremonies.**

Any member who feels unwell should follow the advice from Public Health England. If a member is known to have been infected with COVID-19, then it is standard policy for Public Health to contact all those with whom he has been in contact. Full co-operation is expected to ensure the risk to other unit members – and members of the public – is minimised. We recommend the Secretary maintains physical possession of the attendance book to assist in this process.

If you are worried about a fellow member please keep in contact with them via the phone and text to keep an eye on their wellbeing.

Reduce your risk of coronavirus infection



Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water



Cover nose and mouth with tissues or inside of elbow when coughing or sneezing



If you have a fever, cough or difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance

Your questions answered:

Q: How long does the Coronavirus survive on surfaces?

A: It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. It may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. So please ensure you wash your hands with soap and hot water for 20 seconds (singing Happy Birthday twice) – especially after using public transport.

Q: I am showing symptoms of the virus, what should I do?

A: Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. If you are worried you are showing symptoms of the Coronavirus please use the [111 online coronavirus service](https://111.nhs.uk/coronavirus) to find out what to do next. In Wales call 111 (if available in your area) or 0845 46 47.

Q. I have been asked to self-isolate, what steps should I follow?

A: Please follow the link below if you have been asked to self-isolate for further advice and guidance:

<https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/02/20/what-is-self-isolation-and-why-is-it-important/>

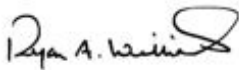
Q: How long is the incubation period for COVID-19?

A: The incubation period means the time between catching the virus and showing symptoms of the disease. Most estimates of the incubation period for COVID-19 range from 1-14 days; most commonly around five days.

As always, the welfare of our members is paramount. We encourage all members to follow this guidance and keep up-to-date with developments from Public Health England as they are issued.



Dr David Staples FRCP,
CEO and Grand Secretary, United Grand Lodge of England



Ryan Williams,
Grand Secretary, Mark Masons' Hall



Dr G R E Shilson,
Grand Secretary General, Ancient and Accepted Rite

Please note that if you know of any members that do not have an email address - please endeavour to pass on this message where possible.



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