



NATIONAL COMMISSIONER OF THE ICELANDIC POLICE

DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL
PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT



Applies to: The media, almannavarnir.is, Administration and Chief Epidemiologist's contacts.

STATUS REPORT

Date: 24.03.2020

Time: 16:30

Location: Coordination Centre / Directorate of Health / Chief Epidemiologist

Emergency / Distress Phase: COVID-19

Event description

Every effort is being made to distribute information and advice to the public, to public bodies and to companies. All instructions can be found on the Directorate of Health website, the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police website and the covid.is information website.

Advice regarding Covid-19

Ways to get advice from nurses:

Serious illness:

- Phone the 1700 number outside working hours
- Call your health-care centre during working hours

Lesser illness:

- Communication through My Pages on Heilsuvera.is
- Net chat on heilsuvera.is - 8:00–22:00h

The Medical Hotline (Læknavaktin) and Heilsuvera are under a great deal of strain. We urge everyone to read the information available on the above-mentioned websites.

The number of infected persons in Iceland is now 648, including 270 domestic infections and 172 where the origin of the infection is unknown.

A total of 10,658 samples have been taken, including 357 in the last 24 hours. Two of the people diagnosed with COVID-19 in Iceland have passed away.

[According to the National University Hospital](#) 11 patients have been admitted to the hospital with COVID-19, of which 2 are in intensive care. 56 individuals have recovered and 12 individuals have been discharged from the hospital.

Press conference no. 24, 24 March 2020

Participating in the meeting were Chief Epidemiologist Þórólfur Guðnason, Director of Health Alma D. Möller, Director of Medicine for the Reykjavik Area Health-Care Service Óskar Reykdalsson and Chief Superintendent of Police Víðir Reynisson, who led the meeting.

Chief Epidemiologist Þórólfur Guðnason said that out of those newly diagnosed with the infection, 60 % are already in quarantine, which tells us that the measures and methods we have been using are working. The specialist team's mathematical model shows that the average increase per day in Iceland continues to be among the lowest in Europe.

This encourages us to continue on the same path as regards disease prevention and measures like the ban on public gatherings, and quarantining.

Dr. Guðnason encouraged everyone to continue the social measures – they are all designed to decrease transmissions and thus protect vulnerable groups. There has been some discussion about a travel ban. Dr. Guðnason said that it does not work, but experience and science have shown that such measures will at best delay an epidemic. If there were to be closures between regions of the country, the virus would pop up once the closures were lifted, and we could be looking at a new epidemic. A travel ban is therefore not an option.

A third of the infections diagnosed in Iceland were contracted abroad, a third locally and the origins of the final third are unknown. It is clear that the virus has arrived here from more places than just from the Alps – therefore the infections are more widespread than previously believed.

As of today, it looks like the epidemic may last for 6 to 8 weeks. A new predictive model on the development of the epidemic will be published tomorrow. The team of experts from the National University Hospital and the University of Iceland that has been working on the models is expected to present its predictions tomorrow and attend the daily information meeting on Thursday at 14:00h.

It was announced yesterday that of the 350 children tested, three children under the age of ten have been found to be infected. Dr. Guðnason said that this was a sample, but not a definitive number – many people have noticed that 11 children were registered at covid.is and the numbers were therefore not correct. 355 children under the age of ten have been examined and the infection rate is 3 %. Out of 433 children tested by deCODE, none were found to be infected. Dr. Guðnason said that this supports the theory that it is uncommon for children to become infected, but that this might change as the disease develops.

Dr. Guðnason said that the shortage of sampling swabs is a cause for worry. The virology department of the National University Hospital currently has around 2000 swabs in stock. However, sampling swabs provided by Össur are being tested.

Director of Health Alma D. Möller said that the National University Hospital revealed this morning that a death had occurred. We will continue to emphasise the disclosure of facts, but we have explained that we will not discuss individual cases – please show some consideration. „We are a well-informed and hard-working nation with good infrastructure and we know how to stick together through trying times.“ All elective surgeries that can stand to be delayed will be deferred for 8 weeks. She asks doctors to contact their patients.

Director of Medicine for the Reykjavik Area Health-Care Service Óskar Reykdalsson said that the organisational structure of the Health-Care Service was under strain due to COVID-19. There is widespread and solid cooperation between the parties involved, and the division of tasks between the Emergency Medical Watch, the National University Hospital and the Health-Care Service is clear. The National University Hospital takes care of those who have a confirmed infection and the Health-Care Service looks after the others – such as those who are in quarantine and those suffering from other illnesses. The Health-Care Service’s work stations are divided up and the inflow is controlled. Those who are infected come in at a certain time of day and to a specific place in the building. „Therefore it is so important for us to get a phone-call first and to be able to organise the work to protect our clients as well as possible.“

There has been a considerable number of requests for quarantine certificates, which can be applied for at heilsuvera.is. There is a considerable strain due to requests for all kinds of certificates. The Health-Care Service would like to ask employers to step up and take the situation into consideration. People are also asked not to come to get their certificates in person, but to get them electronically.

An infection was diagnosed at Fjörður Health-Care Centre in Hafnarfjörður. The Mosfellsbær Health-Care Centre will reopen next Friday.

The Health-Care Service can not take samples from everyone who wants to have one taken. It is important to keep in mind that it is only possible to diagnose whether the virus is present when the sample is taken. Therefore there have to be some symptoms present – this increases the likelihood of a correct diagnosis. Sampling is also offered on weekends.

The Health-Care Service’s psychologists’ services are available to those who are ill with COVID-19, to help with anxiety, etc.

Víðir Reynisson – the ban on public gathering has been going well. It is important that people follow the rules. People have to take the situation seriously.

Requests for exemption from the Ministry of Health have to be sent in from many locations.

Information sharing

The website www.covid.is

Statistical information about the disease is updated once a day and published just before noon on the covid.is website.

The website contains information about the measures that have been taken in Iceland due to the COVID-19 disease.

The website also contains various numerical information. The website is in constant development and is regularly updated. It is currently available in Icelandic, English and Polish. It is now possible to view and print various posters that have been published.

Upcoming:

- Press conferences will be held every day at 14:03h.
- The next COVID-19 coordination meeting will be held on Wednesday 25 March at 9:00h.

Consultation process and various information

- **All Icelandic residents** who have been abroad and are returning home on 19 March or later will have to go into quarantine for 14 days.
[Sjá upplýsingar á vef embættis landlæknis.](#)
- Press release from the Minister of Health: [Hertar takmarkanir á samkomum – mörkin sett við 20 manns](#)
- [Rafræn útgáfa vottorða til staðfestingar á sóttkví.](#) All those who are currently in quarantine can now enter their information at the heilsuvera.is website and receive a certificate attesting thereto. The certificates are free of charge. Please note that in order to register information at heilsuvera.is, you need to have an electronic certificate.
- [Góð ráð vegna COVID-19 til þeirra sem eiga langveik börn og ungmenni.](#)
- [Nýtt veggspjald á íslensku varðandi notkun hanska og gríma.](#)
- The Ministry of Industries and Innovation, along with MAST and the Icelandic Veterinary Association have set up a reserve team of veterinarians to render veterinary services. [Bændur hafa einnig gert sinn eigin útkallslista.](#)
- [COVID 19 – Ferðamálastofa, upplýsingafundur 23.02.2020](#)
- [Leiðbeinandi viðmið um íþrótt- og æskulýðsstarf í ljósi takmörkunar á skólastarfi og samkomum.](#)
Guiding criteria on how to interpret the advertisements regarding the limiting of public gatherings due to the epidemic and limitations of school activities with regard to sports and leisure activities for children, young people and adults.
- [Upplýsingar sendar til samtaka sveitarfélaga varðandi samkomubann og börn.](#) Schools, preschools and sports clubs have made detailed plans for the next several days and weeks, in order to follow the Minister of Health's instructions on limiting school activities and gatherings. An English translation is under way.
- Leiðbeiningar v/ [Börn í sóttkví – leiðbeiningar og tillögur til forráðamanna](#) og [Börn með sérþarfir í sóttkví](#)
- [Stjórnvöld koma til móts við vinnumarkaðinn.](#) The government passed a Bill on the right to unemployment compensation benefits to make up for reduced working hours due to a temporary slowing down of companies' economic activities.
- It will be possible to send in applications for unemployment compensation benefits to make up for reduced working hours due to a temporary slowing down of companies' economic activities, at the [Directorate of Labour's website](#). This is a temporary situation that will hopefully only last a short time. It is important to maintain the employment relationship in order not to lose knowledge. Instructions on the website are in Icelandic, English and Polish. Questions and answers can also be found on the website. General applications for

unemployment benefits on the website have also been simplified. Answering services in Polish are available from 13:00 to 15:00h and there is a calculator on the website where you can calculate the reduced work percentage and get an estimate of income. Work is going on both through the internet and over the telephone. Contractors and the self-employed can apply through “My pages”. A certificate of reduced operating activities from Iceland Revenue and Customs must be turned in.

- **Heilsuvera.** More and more people have been contacting health-care workers through the heilsuvera.is website, where it is possible to sign in with electronic identification certificates and communicate with health-care workers. Heilsuvera received a total of 805 inquiries through its net chat yesterday.
- The Heilsuvera website now includes **registration of quarantining via electronic certificate**. It can also issue quarantine certificates. [See the news release at the Ministry of Social Affairs’ website](#). Those who do not have an electronic certificate must use other means of contact. See more information in the news item. A translation into English and Polish is under way.
- See [the Director of Health’s orders to cease elective surgeries](#) in order to make it possible to care for COVID-19 patients as well as render all other necessary health-care services.
- Information regarding the outcome of sampling by deCODE Genetics can be accessed through the Heilsuvera website under the “Samskipti” menu. Sign-in is by electronic certificate.
- [Leiðbeiningar fyrir starfsmenn í sambýlum 2, sent on 23 March 2020](#)
- Avoid online scams and fraud in the time of COVID-19. [Sjá frétt á vef Almannavarnadeildar RLS](#).
- The University of Iceland’s statistical predictions are published on the website www.covid.hi.is
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Status

Iceland – today’s status

Data: <https://www.covid.is/data>

Coronavirus – Global spread

According to Johns Hopkins, **395,647 individual cases** of COVID-19 have been confirmed today and **17,241 individuals** have died. **103,317 individuals** have already recovered from the illness. There has been a boom in the distribution of the virus throughout Europe. The ECDC has raised its risk assessment to a risk of a moderate to high threat to public health. Cf. the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) website for information on the development in each country. Cf. the ECDC risk assessment.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs’ Consular Service

On March 20 to 23 the Consular Service received nearly 900 inquiries, compared with 2,000 inquiries on March 14 to 19. There has therefore been some reduction in inquiries, but they have become more complicated at the same time. There has been a significant number of cases where Icelanders have been finding it difficult to find an easy way to get home, due to border closings and stricter conditions for en-route stops.

We are collaborating with the other Nordic Countries to monitor flight availabilities and map the locations of residents of the Nordic countries who may have to be brought home if they become completely stranded.

Some notable information from the Consular Service database:

Since February 25 of 2020, when the database was opened, some 10,500 people have registered. Of those, 6,000 have returned home.

Since March 20 of 2020, some 1,000 people have registered.

Around 4,500 of those registered in the database are still abroad, including:

A scant 1,000 who expect to travel home before the end of the month

Around 1,000 who have plans to return home in the next two months

Around 2,500 who have given an uncertain date for travelling home, which suggests that they are staying abroad for the long term.

[Grunnur borgarabjónustunnar.](#)

[Afskráning fyrir þá sem eru komnir heim.](#)

The database gives a good indication of the situation, but further analysis of the information is being carried out. Some 4,200 people have responded to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' request to deregister once they have arrived home, so that the Ministry can have the best possible overview of the situation. We continue to urge all Icelanders who are currently travelling abroad, and those who have been staying abroad for the long term but are planning to return home, to enter their information into the database.

The biggest group by far is still the one in Spain. Of the just over 3,000 persons who were registered as being in Spain on 19 March, about half seem to have returned home already, there being currently 1,500 registered as being there. Still, it must be kept in mind that some people many have decided to hasten their return date without notifying it, and that many Icelanders residing in Spain seem to plan to stay on.

Around 600 people are registered in the United States, just over 460 in the Nordic countries, 260 in the United Kingdom and a number are registered in Slovakia and Hungary, where Icelanders often go to study medicine.

The Consular Service is working closely with the other Nordic Consular Services to monitor the availability of flights to the Nordic countries so as to be able to render assistance to any residents of the Nordic countries who are at risk of being stranded, especially in more distant countries.