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**To: All Branches**

Dear Colleagues,

**NHS Recognising Coronavirus/Covid-19 Symptoms Poster - How to Tell the Difference Between the Flu, a Common Cold, and Coronavirus/Covid-19:**

It's not always as easy to tell the difference between Coronavirus/Covid-19, the Flu and the Common Cold and the attached NHS Poster compares the symptoms of each virus in a simple way, given the best available information to date. The Health, Safety & Environment Department are circulating the poster for the assistance of Branches and Health and Safety Reps.

Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. COVID-19 is caused by infection with a new coronavirus (called SARS-CoV-2) and Flu is caused by infection with influenza viruses. Because some of the symptoms of Flu and COVID-19 are similar, it may be hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone, and testing may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis. Flu and COVID-19 share many characteristics, but there are some key differences between the two. The common cold is also a viral infection of your nose and throat (upper respiratory tract). It's usually harmless, although it might not feel that way. Again there are similarities in some symptoms. Many types of viruses can cause a common cold.

As we edge into winter, with no signs of the Covid-19 pandemic slowing down there are widespread concerns and anxiety about getting ill with the virus. The first indication of any form of sickness often leaves people instantly anxious that they've caught Covid-19 and while it's very important that people are sensible and take steps to isolate if they do reasonably fear that they've contracted Covid-19, it's also worth remembering that it could easily be something else.

In the colder winter months, cases of Flu and the common cold will be on the rise, which means either of those could well be the culprit for people feeling under-the-weather. But of course, it's not always easy to tell the difference between Coronavirus/Covid-19, the Flu, and a cold.

COVID-19 and the common cold share similar respiratory symptoms, like a cough. However, with coronavirus, people tend to have a dry cough and will cough much more frequently and continuously, and it may be accompanied by shortness of breath. The common cold cough is generally milder and wet. Coronavirus will usually lead to a full-blown fever. On the other

hand, although a cold can cause a slightly raised temperature it's unlikely to develop into a fever. A cold will leave you sneezing, with a stuffy and runny nose. Typically, sneezing or a stuffy, runny nose are not symptoms of Covid-19 or Flu. Changes to taste and smell will differ. You can find the loss of smell and taste a lot more noticeable and extreme with Covid-19, as opposed to a regular cold where there are usually only minor changes to smell and taste.

There are quite a lot of common, overlapping symptoms between Covid-19 and the Flu. The symptoms that are very common in both illnesses include cough, fever and fatigue. The risk of catching the Flu can be countered by getting a Flu Jab – This is 'free of charge' to all Post Office and Royal Mail CWU members – See LTBs 414/20, 437/20, 478/20 and 500/20. The main difference is how suddenly symptoms come on. If your symptoms come on suddenly it is more likely to be Flu, as COVID-19 symptoms usually develop gradually. With the Flu, you may wake up and suddenly feel achy and have a fever, and you may feel too ill to function. With COVID-19, this tends to be at a more gradual pace compared to Flu and symptoms range from mild to severe. Symptoms may start off mild but can become quite serious particularly around day 7 of infection.

While the poster shows that there are certainly some differentiating factors between the three illnesses, it's frustrating that the only way of knowing for certain if you've contracted Covid-19 is to have a COVID-19 test.

If your only symptoms are a new continuous dry cough, loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath, and high temperature, then it is probable that you have COVID-19, and you should act accordingly. It is important to note that no diagnosis based on symptoms alone is 100% accurate and if you find yourself with symptoms of COVID-19 then you must isolate and arrange a test as soon as possible for your own peace of mind and to keep others safe.

**Remember:**

- Wash hands regularly, keep your distance from others, keep hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes handy for those times when you don't have access to soap and water.
- Get a Flu Jab at the earliest opportunity.
- Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 must isolate and arrange a Covid-19 test as soon as possible for their own peace of mind and to keep others safe.

**Attachment:**

- NHS Recognising Coronavirus/Covid-19, Flu and Cold Symptoms Poster

Yours sincerely



**Dave Joyce**  
**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**