

March 2021: This document was put together by Sligo PPN in response to queries that have been emerging with regard to people accessing vaccination appointments. It is meant to be a simple guide of hints and tips that we have searched for on your behalf. We are not experts in infection control, so of course it is important that you all continue to follow official public health advice.

# Travelling to Vaccination Appointments

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## Some Safety Guidelines for Drivers and Passengers

If you can make the journey to a vaccination centre on your own please do so, don't share the car with anyone if it is at all avoidable. If you have to go with someone, there are a few things that you both can do to try and keep yourself safe;

- make sure that the person you are travelling with does not have acute symptoms of respiratory illness.
- Use a respirator or at least a facemask for the entire journey.
- Make sure you have the contact details of the other passenger so that you can track them down if you find out you're infected
- Take all possible steps to ensure the car is well ventilated
- Positioning of passengers – if there is one driver and one passenger the passenger should sit in the back of the car at the opposite side.

## Disinfect

Disinfect all the surfaces you touch before and after the journey, especially if you're sharing the car with someone or gave someone a lift. Take this cleaning very seriously: disinfecting the steering wheel, gearstick, handbrake, door handles, radio and entertainment controls would occur to everyone, but don't forget the stalks on the steering column (indicators and windscreen wipers, cruise control), elbow rests, seat position controls, door frames and exterior door handles or luggage compartment handle. These principles are even more important for taxi drivers and other drivers who transport passengers to appointments.

You can use some of the cleaning products you already have at home. At least seventy per cent alcohol solution is effective against coronavirus, and isopropyl alcohol won't do the main surfaces in your car any harm. You can also use the same solution to wipe down seats and arm-rests, but just be careful to wipe, rather than soak, such surfaces. Scrubbing those surfaces is also not recommended, and indeed isn't needed - the alcohol in the solution is what breaks down the physical structure of the virus, not the mechanical action of cleaning.

It's a good idea to clean down the exterior door and boot handles too, although avoid using hydrogen peroxide bleach, as this will damage the paint and possibly the plastic and metal surfaces. And don't use a cleaning product containing ammonia on touchscreens in the cabin.

## Facemasks protect others, respirators protect you

Especially if you are travelling with passengers and one of them is at risk of having come into contact with an infected person, use protective gear, meaning facemasks and respirators. A classic fabric facemask won't protect the wearer against the virus, but it can significantly reduce the risk of the wearer infecting others. So even a basic facemask is a sign of consideration towards the others in the car and can reduce the risk of infection. For genuine protection, you need respirators of FFP3 class at least.

## Parts of the interior you should disinfect

● STEERING WHEEL ● GEARSTICK ● HANDBRAKE ● DOOR HANDLES ● RADIO AND INFOTAINMENT CONTROLS ● STEERING COLUMN STALKS (INDICATORS, WINDSCREEN WIPERS, CRUISE CONTROL) ● ELBOW RESTS ● SEAT POSITION CONTROLS ● DOOR FRAME



The best thing to use to disinfect the car interior is isopropyl alcohol and a micro-fibre cloth.

## Parts of the exterior you should disinfect

● DOOR HANDLES ● DOOR FRAME ● LUGGAGE COMPARTMENT HANDLE



Also disinfect any parts of the exterior you touch – mainly the exterior door handles or luggage compartment handle. These principles are doubly important for tax drivers and other drivers who transport passengers.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.skoda-storyboard.com/en/lifestyle/how-to-stay-safe-when-travelling-by-car-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

## Air-conditioning

As for air conditioning, there are cleaning kits available to order, and you simply have to spray the cleaning product in through the car's interior air vents. It's not as good as proper, dealer clean, but it's better than nothing - the disinfection spray may not wipe out the Coronavirus, but having a cleaner heating and air-conditioning system means a lower risk of the virus attaching itself to it.

It's not yet known how prevalent Covid-19 is in the air, but you're unlikely to be sucking much of it into your car's system from outside. Much more likely is the possibility of you, or others, spreading the virus within the car, and the air conditioning system circulating it around the cabin. So, while filters may help, the best advice is the same advice for all other aspects of this virus crisis - keep your hands clean, wipe down surfaces when you can, and keep your distance from others as much as possible. That goes for inside the car as well as outside.<sup>2</sup>

## Open Your Windows

Unsurprisingly, studies have found that the ventilation rate in a car are lowest when all four windows are closed. In this scenario, simulations have found that roughly 8 to 10 per cent of aerosols exhaled by one of the car's occupants could reach the other person. When all the windows were completely open, on the other hand, ventilation rates soared, and the influx of fresh air flushed many of the airborne particles out of the car; just 0.2 to 2 per cent of the simulated aerosols travelled between driver and passenger.

These results are in line with public-health guidelines that recommend opening windows to reduce the spread of coronavirus in enclosed spaces.

Because it is not always practical to have all the windows wide open, the next best strategy is to open the windows that are opposite each occupant. That configuration allows fresh air to flow in through the back right window and out through the front left window and helps create a barrier between the driver and the passenger.<sup>3</sup> The study also showed that opening the window half way is nearly as effective as having it fully open, but only opening it a quarter of the way diminishes effectiveness.

## Filling up safely

If you absolutely have to go somewhere by car, it's highly likely that you'll need to buy fuel sooner or later. Don't forget to be very careful about hygiene at petrol stations. Minimise contact with the staff. Choose a self-service filling station if you can. After filling up your car, immediately wash your hands or at least disinfect them with a hand disinfectant solution – you should have a sufficient quantity of these in your car.

Ideally, use one of the modern methods for paying for your fuel: payment by contactless card or mobile phone, for example. Some petrol stations let you use contactless payment methods right at the pump, so you don't need to go inside the shop. And incidentally, another way to reduce risk is by making sure the tank is full, so you don't need to go back to the petrol station soon after.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/motors/coronavirus-how-to-keep-your-car-a-safe-haven-during-the-crisis-1.4205729>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/health-family/sharing-a-car-here-s-which-windows-to-open-to-lower-the-risk-of-coronavirus-transmission-1.4461137>

## 5 ways to stay safe in your car during the coronavirus pandemic



- 1** If you have to go anywhere by car, go alone.
- 2** If you can't go alone, protect yourself and all the other passengers with respirators or at least facemasks. Make sure you have the contact details of all the other passengers.
- 3** Disinfect your car thoroughly. Focus on the places you touch most often. Don't forget to wash your hands!
- 4** Use protective gear: facemasks and respirators. You might find a facemask in your car first aid kit.
- 5** Fill up safely. Use contactless payment methods and mobile apps whenever possible.