

Chiswick Health Practice

Requests for certification of absence from the workplace relating to covid-19 may fall into five categories:

1. Symptomatic so isolating for seven days
Patients can and should self-certify for the first seven days as normal if they are unfit to work. They do not need to contact their GP.
2. Symptomatic and remaining unwell for over seven days
If they remain unwell and unfit to work after seven days, the current advice is to visit www.111.nhs.uk where there is an online self-assessment tool which should be up and running soon. They do not need to contact their GP for a certificate but you can advise patients to use the template form below.
3. Household contact symptoms so isolating for fourteen days as per government advice
GPs cannot and are not the gatekeeper of the statutory sick pay system and can only provide certificates for the purpose of illness, not in relation to government advice regarding self-isolation. Employers are responsible for putting in place arrangements for home/remote working where this is possible. Where it is not, the employee may self-certify and return to work following the relevant absence which their employer may authorise as per government advice.
4. At risk group so following government advice
Where they do become unwell during or after this time, point 1 and 2 applies. They do not need to contact their GP.
5. Those in full time education who are symptomatic or requiring self-isolation.
There is no NHS requirement to issue certification to schools or colleges to confirm absence. These organisations must work with parents and students to ensure that any absence is appropriately recorded, obviating the need for a 'doctor's note'. They do not need to contact their GP.

The current Government Guidance for employers and businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19) states;

“By law, medical evidence is not required for the first 7 days of sickness. After 7 days, employers may use their discretion around the need for medical evidence if an employee is staying at home.

We strongly suggest that employers use their discretion around the need for medical evidence for a period of absence where an employee is advised to stay at home either as they are unwell themselves, or live with someone who is, in accordance with the public health advices issued by the government.”

Until further guidance is available, Londonwide LMCs would suggest that practices upload the attached letter to their website and requests that if needed by patients they use this letter as the practice will not provide a medical certificate for patients requiring self-isolation for coronavirus.

Dear Employer

Request for medical certification from absence of work related to the Covid-19 pandemic

Your employee has been absent from work from __ / __ / 2020.

The reason for this is that they are following current Government and/or Public Health advice related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, this is because;

- They are symptomatic (7 days)
- They are symptomatic and continue to be after seven days
 - Date fit to return to work (where applicable) __ / __ / 2020
- A household contact is symptomatic so they are required to self-isolate (14 days)
- They are following government advice for high risk patients as they suffer with:

Due to the current pandemic and pressure on General Practice, we are prioritising the urgent medical needs of our patients and will not be providing a medical certificate for this absence.

By law employers may use their discretion around the need for medical evidence if an employee is absent from work for more than seven days due to sickness. We would ask you to apply this discretion to help support NHS general practice provide care for our population rather than being asked to fulfil unnecessary administrative tasks.

Should you decide on taking disciplinary action against an employee purely on the grounds of being unable to provide the sickness medical certification relating to Covid-19 pandemic we would make it very clear in any disciplinary/grievance/tribunal reports that under the circumstances we would deem your action inappropriate.

Many thanks for your assistance during this challenging time

Dr B Unger - Graeber

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