SIM UK FAQs about Covid-19 disruption

**Do SIM require me to return? Whose decision is it whether I can stay or leave?**

Your receiving entity has the right to require you to return if they consider the risks for you are too high. This is part of their duty of care towards you. SIM International has requested that people with vulnerabilities to CV19, due to age or underlying health conditions, leave the field if possible. Most decisions are being made on an individual basis in conversation with your local leadership, your sending church and SIM UK. Please don’t decide about returning without consulting others.

The UK Government are advising ‘tourists’ and ‘travellers’ to return to the UK if possible because they recognise that soon it will not be possible as borders close. Permanent residents in a country are not advised to return. Most of you fall between these categories and it’s more about whether you need to be back in the UK in the next few months or whether you can sit tight for things to open up again. We’re hopeful that we’ve already spoken with all who need to return and most people have made it back.

**How do we know when a country will close their borders?**

We do not know for certain! We recommend all workers with SIM discuss their options and situations with their sending mobiliser and their team or receiving country.

More countries are closing their borders and preventing international travel. Many airlines have suspended operations to and from different countries.

**Will emergency evacuation be available if countries shut their borders?**

The company that Banner are using for medevacs, Global Healix, is still operating but may encounter issues if airspaces are closed. The ability to do evacuations will largely depend on whether there is still transport available, and whether that country will allow expatriate workers to return to their passport country.

**Can I afford to book this flight urgently? Will SIM help out? Can I claim against needing to purchase new flights if it’s not possible to transfer flights with the original airline?**

We will ensure that costs are met. Our insurance with Banner is very comprehensive and will cover returning flights. Please make us aware of your situation and we’ll help you work through.

**Visa decisions: what happens if my visa expires whilst I’m in lockdown and unable to leave the country?**

If your receiving country does not permit travel and your visa expires, we will apply at the earliest possibility for renewal.

**Is SIM still sending people in the summer?**

We are currently expecting that global travel will be disrupted until at least the end of summer, but the situation is still uncertain. Please keep in touch with your mobiliser.

**Should we stop raising support for short-term placements?**

If your placement is cancelled, postponed or looking likely not to continue, please do not collect financial support as it is difficult to reimburse. Most people’s support for short-term trips comes in during the last 6-8 week so once we have the green light to travel again, there should still be time to support-raise.

**Who do I contact at SIM UK?**

Please contact your Mobiliser in the first instance for questions that are not addressed here.  
David Silver ([finance.director@sim.co.uk](mailto:finance.director@sim.co.uk)) is the SIM UK Point Person for Covid-19.

SIM International FAQs – Covid-19 and health

**I have just returned home after international travel. Should I self-isolate?**

SIM’s current advice is to avoid all but essential international travel. If you are returning after recent travel, and in the absence of specific advice from the country you arrive in, we advise that you self-isolate for 14 days, regardless of your recent travel history.

**I have mild symptoms that may be coronavirus. What should I do?**[[1]](#footnote-1)

The most common symptoms of coronavirus are the recent onset of:

a new continuous cough  
and/or

a high temperature

If you live alone and show mild symptoms, stay at home for 7 days from when your symptoms started.

Leave home only after:

* + You have had no fever for at least 72 hours, without the use of medicine to reduce fever AND
  + Other symptoms have improved (for example, cough or shortness of breath)  
    AND
  + At least 7 days have passed since your first symptoms appeared.

If you live with others and are the first to show mild symptoms

* + stay at home for 7 days (and follow the guidance above about leaving home)
  + all other household members, even if they remain well, must not leave the house for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill.

It is likely that people living within a household will infect each other or already be infected. Staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community.

**When should I seek medical advice?**

You should seek medical advice if you have difficulty breathing, your condition gets worse or you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home. It is important to consider that a high temperature may be caused by a different condition, for example malaria or dengue fever.

**What medication should I take if I am at home with symptoms? Is ibuprofen safe?**

There is no specific treatment for COVID-19 but if you are at home with mild symptoms you should:

* + drink plenty of water to stay hydrated – drink enough so your urine is pale and clear
  + take paracetamol (acetaminophen) to help ease your symptoms

There have been concerns about taking ibuprofen but there is currently no good evidence that doing so makes coronavirus worse. However, we recommend taking paracetamol to treat the symptoms, unless your doctor has told you paracetamol is not suitable for you. If you are already taking ibuprofen or another non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) on the advice of a doctor, do not stop taking it without checking first.

**What about pregnant women?**

Pregnant women who develop COVID-19 do not appear to be more severely unwell than the general population but, as this is a new virus, experts are taking a very cautious approach.

However, pregnant women are more vulnerable to getting infections than a woman who is not pregnant.[[2]](#footnote-2) Some countries have added pregnant women to the list of people more vulnerable to coronavirus and have advised them to reduce social contact through social distancing measures.

We would urge pregnant women to think very carefully about their plans for the rest of their pregnancy. Travel is becoming increasingly difficult and flight restrictions and border closures may mean that future travel is impossible. Pregnant women currently in lower-resource countries should think very seriously about relocating.

**What about my future essential travel plans?**

The global situation continues to move very quickly. Flight cancellations and border closures are increasing around the world. If you need to travel for essential reasons (medical, pregnancy, family, upcoming home assignment) then we strongly urge you to consider travelling now.

**I participate in SIM-MED. Will SIM-MED cover me if I get COVID-19?**

SIM-MED will cover medical expenses, including testing, as per the normal SIM-MED coverage (90 per cent). If you are required by the government to be quarantined in an official medical facility then this will also be covered, but not if this was as a result of non-essential travel. SIM-MED will not cover expenses resulting from home isolation.

**If I get COVID-19, will I be medically evacuated if I need a higher-level care than is available locally?**

Insurance and medical evacuation companies are indicating that medical evacuation in the event of COVID-19 is unlikely. As things stand, you should assume you will not be able to be medically evacuated in the event of you having COVID-19 and needing higher-level care than is available locally. That is why we advise those who at higher risk if they contract COVID-19, and who are living in lower-resource countries, should consider relocation.

**What if I become unwell with another medical problem?**

We must assume that medical evacuation for any other reason may be more complicated at this time. We advise those in lower-resource countries with other significant medical issues, even if these do not increase your vulnerability to severe COVID-19, to consider whether it might be wiser to relocate.

**If you have any questions relating to this section of the document please contact** [**international.health@sim.org**](mailto:international.health@sim.org)

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

   <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/covid-19-virus-infection-and-pregnancy/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)