

GETTING YOUR WORKPLACE READY FOR COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic spreads through respiratory droplets. When someone who has COVID-19 coughs or exhales they release droplets of infected fluid. Most of these droplets fall on nearby surfaces and objects, such as desks, tables or telephones. People could catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects, and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. If they are standing within 1 meter of a person with COVID-19 they can catch it by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them. In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to flu.

Simple ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your workplace

Employers should start doing these things now, even if COVID-19 has not arrived in the communities where they operate.

- Make sure your workplaces are clean and hygienic – Maintain regular routine cleaning and disinfecting of Surfaces (e.g. desks and tables), equipment, and other elements of the work environment (e.g. telephones).
- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible
- Promote regular and thorough hand-washing by employees, contractors, and visitors -Put sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the workplace. Make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled
- Promote good respiratory hygiene in the workplace – Ensure that face masks or paper tissues are available at your workplaces, for those who develop a runny nose or cough at work, along with closed bins for hygienically disposing of them
- Increasing ventilation rates in the work environment.
- Brief your employees, contractors, and visitors that if COVID-19 starts spreading in your community anyone with even a mild cough or low-grade fever (37.3 C or more) needs to stay at home. They should also stay home (or work from home) if they have had to take simple medications, such as paracetamol/acetaminophen, ibuprofen or aspirin, which may mask symptoms of infection
- The need for social distancing, staggered work shifts, downsizing staff where there is overcrowding and lack of social distancing, delivering services remotely, and other exposure-reducing measures.

Remember:

- Now is the time to prepare for COVID-19. Simple precautions and planning can make a big difference. Action now will help protect your employees and your business.

How to manage COVID-19 risk when organizing meetings and events

Why do employers and organizers need to think about COVID-19?

There is a risk that people attending your meeting or event might unwittingly bring the COVID-19 Virus to the meeting. Others might be unknowingly exposed to COVID-19. Although COVID-19 is a mild disease for most people, it can make some very ill. Around 1 in every 5 people who catch COVID-19 needs hospital treatment.

BEFORE the meeting or event

- Consider whether a face-to-face meeting or event is needed. Could it be replaced by a teleconference or online event?
- Could the meeting or event be scaled down so that fewer people attend?
- Actively monitor where COVID-19 is circulating. Advise participants in advance that if they have any symptoms or feel unwell, they should not attend.
- If someone at the meeting or event has a travel history from COVID-19 hotspot, the organizer should inform the participants.
- Make sure all organizers, participants, caterers, and visitors at the event provide contact details: mobile telephone number, email, and address where they are staying.

DURING the meeting or event

- Provide information or a briefing, preferably both orally and in writing, on COVID-19 and the measures that organizers are taking to make this event safe for participants.
- Display dispensers of alcohol-based hand rub prominently around the venue.
- If there is space, arrange seats so that participants are at least 1 meter apart.
- Open windows and doors whenever possible to make sure the venue is well ventilated.

AFTER the meeting

- Retain the names and contact details of all participants for at least one month. This will help public health authorities trace people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 if one or more participants become ill shortly after the event.
- If someone at the meeting or event was isolated as a suspected COVID-19 case, the organizer should inform participants. They should be advised to monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days and take their temperature twice a day.

Things to consider when you and your employees travel

Encourage employees to discontinue nonessential travel to locations with ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks.

BEFORE traveling

- Make sure your organization and its employees have the latest information on areas where COVID-19 is spreading.
- Based on the latest information, your organization should assess the benefits and risks related to upcoming travel plans.
- Avoid sending employees who may be at higher risk of serious illness (e.g. older employees and those with medical conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease) to areas where COVID-19 is spreading.
- Make sure all persons travelling to locations reporting COVID-19 are briefed by a qualified professional (e.g. staff health services, health care provider or local public health partner)
- Consider issuing employees who are about to travel with small bottles of alcohol-based hand rub. This can facilitate regular hand-washing.

WHILE traveling:

- Encourage employees to wash their hands regularly and stay at least 1 m away from people who are coughing or sneezing.
- Ensure employees know what to do and whom to contact if they feel ill while traveling.

ON RETURN from traveling:

- Employees who have returned from an area where COVID-19 is spreading should monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days and take their temperature twice a day.
- If they develop even a mild cough or low-grade fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.3 C or more) they should stay at home and self-isolate.

Source - Compiled with reference to World Health Organization - article 'getting work place ready'