The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20200306210106/https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/comm...

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), February 2020

This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will update this interim guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

CDC is working across the Department of Health and Human Services and across the U.S. government in the public health response to COVID-19. Much is unknown about how the virus that causes COVID-19 spreads. Current knowledge is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses.

CDC Industry Guidance

- Resources for Airlines
- Resources for the Ship Industry

CDC Public and Private Partner Call for COVID-19 — March 4, 2020

Dr. Jay Butler, CDC's Deputy Director for Infectious Diseases and Senior Response Official for the COVID-19 response provided a situational update for CDC partners, including members of the private sector, public health organizations, universities, and clinical societies.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in humans and many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread between people, such as with MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV. The virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading from person-to-person in China and some limited person-to-person transmission has been reported in countries outside China, including the United States. However, respiratory illnesses like seasonal influenza, are currently widespread in many US communities.

The following interim guidance may help prevent workplace exposures to acute respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19, in non-healthcare settings. The guidance also provides planning considerations if there are more widespread, community outbreaks of COVID-19.

To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, use only the guidance described below to determine risk of COVID-19. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin, and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed COVID-19. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features of COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing. Updates are available on CDC's web page at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/covid19.

Recommended strategies for employers to use now:

- **Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:**
  - Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
  - Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.
  - Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
  - Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
  - Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.
- **Separate sick employees:**
  - CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Sick employees should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available).
- **Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees:**
  - Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
  - Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
  - Instruct employees to clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
  - Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.
  - Visit the coughing and sneezing etiquette and clean hands webpage for more information.
- **Perform routine environmental cleaning:**
  - Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
  - No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.

- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

- **Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps:**
  - Check the CDC's Traveler's Health Notices for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from China, and information for aircrew, can be found at on the CDC website.
  - Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of acute respiratory illness before starting travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
  - Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and should promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
  - If outside the United States, sick employees should follow your company's policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to assist them with finding an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, and resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.
- **Additional Measures in Response to Currently Occurring Sporadic Importations of the COVID-19:**
  - Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.
  - If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed COVID-19 should refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.

Planning for a Possible COVID-19 Outbreak in the US

The severity of illness or how many people will fall ill from COVID-19 is unknown at this time. If there is evidence of a COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S., employers should plan to be able to respond in a flexible way to varying levels of severity and be prepared to refine their business response plans as needed. For the general American public, such as workers in non-healthcare settings and where it is unlikely that work tasks create an increased risk of exposures to COVID-19, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low. The CDC and its partners will continue to monitor national and international data on the severity of illness caused by COVID-19, will disseminate the results of these ongoing surveillance assessments, and will make additional recommendations as needed.

Planning Considerations

All employers need to consider how best to decrease the spread of acute respiratory illness and lower the impact of COVID-19 in their workplace in the event of an outbreak in the US. They should identify and communicate their objectives, which may include one or more of the following: (a) reducing transmission among staff, (b) protecting people who are at higher risk for adverse health complications, (c) maintaining business operations, and (d) minimizing adverse effects on other entities in their supply chains. Some of the key considerations when making decisions on appropriate responses are:

- Disease severity (i.e., number of people who are sick, hospitalization and death rates) in the community where the business is located;
- Impact of disease on employees that are vulnerable and may be at higher risk for COVID-19 adverse health complications. Inform employees that some people may be at higher risk for severe illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions.
- Prepare for possible increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in employees and their family members, dismissals of early childhood programs and K-12 schools due to high levels of absenteeism or illness:
    - Employers should plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace. Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher than usual absenteeism.
    - Cross-train personnel to perform essential functions so that the workplace is able to operate even if key staff members are absent.
    - Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products. Be prepared to change your business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations if needed).
- Employers with more than one business location are encouraged to provide local managers with the authority to take appropriate actions outlined in their business infectious disease outbreak response plan based on the condition in each locality.
- Coordination with state and local health officials is strongly encouraged for all businesses so that timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses in each location where their operations reside. Since the intensity of an outbreak may differ according to geographic location, local health officials will be issuing guidance specific to their communities.

Important Considerations for Creating an Infectious Disease Outbreak Response Plan

All employers should be ready to implement strategies to protect their workforce from COVID-19 while ensuring continuity of operations. During a COVID-19 outbreak, all sick employees should stay home and away from the workplace, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene should be encouraged, and routine cleaning of commonly touched surfaces should be performed regularly.

Employers should:

- Ensure the plan is flexible and involve your employees in developing and reviewing your plan.
- Conduct a focused discussion or exercise using your plan, to find out ahead of time whether the plan has gaps or problems that need to be corrected.
- Share your plan with employees and explain what human resources policies, workplace and leave flexibilities, and pay and benefits will be available to them.
- Share best practices with other businesses in your communities (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.

Recommendations for an Infectious Disease Outbreak Response Plan:

- Identify possible work-related exposure and health risks to your employees. OSHA has more information on how to protect workers from potential exposures to COVID-19.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the Department of Labor's and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's websites).
- Explore whether you can establish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others if state and local health authorities recommend the use of social distancing strategies. For employees who are able to telework, supervisors should encourage employees to telework instead of coming into the workplace until symptoms are completely resolved. Ensure that you have the information technology and infrastructure needed to support multiple employees who may be able to work from home.
- Identify essential business functions, essential jobs or roles, and critical elements within your supply chains (e.g., raw materials, suppliers, subcontractor services/products, and logistics) required to maintain business operations. Plan for how your business will operate if there is increasing absenteeism or these supply chains are interrupted.
- Set up authorities, triggers, and procedures for activating and terminating the company's infectious disease outbreak response plan, altering business operations (e.g., possibly changing or closing operations in affected areas), and transferring business knowledge to key employees. Work closely with your local health officials to identify these triggers.
- Plan to minimize exposure between employees and also between employees and the public, if public health officials call for social distancing.
- Establish a process to communicate information to employees and business partners on your infectious disease outbreak response plans and latest COVID-19 information. Anticipate employee fear, anxiety, rumors, and misinformation, and plan communications accordingly.
- In some communities, early childhood programs and K-12 schools may be dismissed, particularly if COVID-19 worsens. Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from school. Businesses and other employers should prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies for these employees.
- Local conditions will influence the decisions that public health officials make regarding community-level strategies; employers should take the time now to learn about plans in place in each community where they have a business.
- If there is evidence of a COVID-19 outbreak in the US, consider canceling non-essential business travel to additional countries per travel guidance on the CDC website.
    - Travel restrictions may be enacted by other countries which may limit the ability of employees to return home if they become sick while on travel status.
    - Consider cancelling large work-related meetings or events.
- Engage state and local health departments to confirm channels of communication and methods for dissemination of local outbreak information.

Resources for more information:

CDC Guidance

- COVID-19 Website
- What You Need to Know About COVID-19
- What to Do If You Are Sick With COVID-19
- Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Exposure in Travel-associated or Community Settings
- Health Alert Network
- Travelers' Health Website
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's Small Business International Travel Resource Travel Planner
- Coronavirus Disease 2019 Recommendations for Ships

Other Federal Agencies and Partners

- OSHA Guidance: https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/novel_coronavirus/index.html

Page last reviewed: February 26, 2020

The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20200408115348/https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/comm...

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Plan, Prepare and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019

Older adults and people who have severe underlying chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness.
Find more information here.

Summary of Changes to the Guidance:

Below are changes as of March 21, 2020

- Updated cleaning and disinfection guidance
- Updated best practices for conducting social distancing
- Updated strategies and recommendations that can be implemented now to respond to COVID-19

CDC Industry Guidance

- Resources for Airlines
- Resources for the Ship Industry

OSHA/HHS Guidance

- Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

Purpose

This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The outbreak first started in China, but the virus continues to spread internationally and in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will update this interim guidance as additional information becomes available.

The following interim guidance may help prevent workplace exposures to COVID-19, in non-healthcare settings. (CDC has provided separate guidance for healthcare settings.) This guidance also provides planning considerations for community spread of COVID-19.

To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, use only the guidance described below to determine risk of COVID-19 infection. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed coronavirus infection. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features of COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing. Updates are available on CDC's web page.

Preparing Workplaces for a COVID-19 Outbreak

Businesses and employers can prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19. Employers should plan to respond in a flexible way to varying levels of disease transmission in the community and be prepared to refine their business response plans as needed. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), most American workers will likely experience low (caution) or medium exposure risk levels at their job or place of employment (see OSHA guidance for employers for more information about job risk classifications).

Businesses are strongly encouraged to coordinate with state and local health officials so timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses. Local conditions will influence the decisions that public health officials make regarding community-level strategies. CDC has guidance for mitigation strategies according to the level of community transmission or impact of COVID-19.

All employers need to consider how best to decrease the spread of COVID-19 and lower the impact in their workplace. This may include activities in one or more of the following areas:

a. reduce transmission among employees,
b. maintain healthy business operations, and
c. maintain a healthy work environment.

Reduce Transmission Among Employees

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:

- Employees who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home.

- Sick employees should follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow CDC recommended precautions.

Identify where and how workers might be exposed to COVID-19 at work:

- See OSHA COVID-19 webpage for more information on how to protect workers from potential exposures and guidance for employers , including steps to take for jobs according to exposure risk.
- Be aware that some employees may be at higher risk for serious illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions. Consider minimizing face-to-face contact between these employees or assign work tasks that allow them to maintain a distance of six feet from other workers, customers and visitors, or to telework if possible.

Separate sick employees:

- Employees who appear to have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home.

- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The fellow employees should then self-monitor for symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath).

Educate employees about how they can reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Employees can take steps to protect themselves at work and at home. Older people and people with serious chronic medical conditions are at higher risk for complications.
- Follow the policies and procedures of your employer related to illness, cleaning and disinfecting, and work meetings and travel.
- Stay home if you are sick, except to get medical care. Learn what to do if you are sick.
- Inform your supervisor if you have a sick family member at home with COVID-19. Learn what to do if someone in your house is sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Learn more about coughing and sneezing etiquette on the CDC website.
- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs. Dirty surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2, the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- Avoid using other employees' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Practice social distancing by avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible.

Maintain Healthy Business Operations

Identify a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 issues and their impact at the workplace.

Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices.

- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees may want to draft non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies.
- Employers should not require a positive COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the Department of Labor's and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's websites).
- Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources (if available) and community resources as needed. Employees may need additional social, behavioral, and other services, for example, to cope with the death of a loved one.

Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products.

- Be prepared to change your business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize existing customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations if needed).
- Identify alternate supply chains for critical goods and services. Some good and services may be in higher demand or unavailable.
- Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- Talk with business partners about your response plans. Share best practices with other businesses in your communities (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.

Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from childcare programs and K-12 schools.

- Plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace.
- Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher than usual absenteeism.
- Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies.
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.

Consider establishing policies and practices for social distancing. Social distancing should be implemented if recommended by state and local health authorities. Social distancing means avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible (e.g., breakrooms and cafeterias). Strategies that business could use include:

- Implementing flexible worksites (e.g., telework)
- Implementing flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts)
- Increasing physical space between employees at the worksite
- Increasing physical space between employees and customers (e.g., drive through, partitions)
- Implementing flexible meeting and travel options (e.g., postpone non-essential meetings or events)
- Downsizing operations
- Delivering services remotely (e.g. phone, video, or web)
- Delivering products through curbside pick-up or delivery

Employers with more than one business location are encouraged to provide local managers with the authority to take appropriate actions outlined in their COVID-19 response plan based on local conditions.

Maintain a healthy work environment

Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system. This may include some or all of the following activities:

- Increase ventilation rates.
- Increase the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system.

Support respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene for employees, customers, and worksite visitors:

- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
- Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. If hands are visibly dirty, soap and water should be chosen over hand sanitizer. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained.
- Place hand sanitizers in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.
- Place posters that encourage hand hygiene to help stop the spread at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
- Discourage handshaking – encourage the use of other noncontact methods of greeting.
- Direct employees to visit the coughing and sneezing etiquette and clean hands webpage for more information.

Perform routine environmental cleaning and disinfection:

- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.
  - If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
  - For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available here . Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) can be wiped down by employees before each use. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2 , the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.

Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility:

- If a sick employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations.

Advise employees before traveling to take additional preparations:

- Check the CDC's Traveler's Health Notices for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from countries with travel advisories, and information for aircrew, can be found on the CDC website.
- Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of COVID-19 (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) before starting travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
- If outside the United States, sick employees should follow company policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to assist them with finding an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, and resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

Take care when attending meetings and gatherings:

- Carefully consider whether travel is necessary.
- Consider using videoconferencing or teleconferencing when possible for work-related meetings and gatherings.
- Consider canceling, adjusting, or postponing large work-related meetings or gatherings that can only occur in-person.
- When videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces.

Resources for more information:

CDC Guidance

- COVID-19 Website
- What You Need to Know About COVID-19
- What to Do If You Are Sick With COVID-19

- Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Exposure in Travel-associated or Community Settings
- Health Alert Network
- Travelers' Health Website
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's
- Small Business International Travel Resource Travel Planner
- Coronavirus Disease 2019 Recommendations for Ships
- Coronavirus Disease 2019 Recommendations for Airlines and Airline crew
- Persons at Higher Risk of Severe Illness

Other Federal Agencies and Partners

- OSHA COVID-19 Website
- OSHA Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

Page last reviewed: March 22, 2020

The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20200502141539/https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communi...

Plan, Prepare and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019

Older adults and people who have severe underlying chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness.
Find more information here.

Summary of Changes to the Guidance:

Below are changes as of March 21, 2020

- Updated cleaning and disinfection guidance
- Updated best practices for conducting social distancing
- Updated strategies and recommendations that can be implemented now to respond to COVID-19

CDC Industry Guidance

- Resources for Airlines
- Resources for the Ship Industry

OSHA/HHS Guidance

- Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

Purpose

This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The outbreak first started in China, but the virus continues to spread internationally and in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will update this interim guidance as additional information becomes available.

The following interim guidance may help prevent workplace exposures to COVID-19, in non-healthcare settings. (CDC has provided separate guidance for healthcare settings.) This guidance also provides planning considerations for community spread of COVID-19.

To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, use only the guidance described below to determine risk of COVID-19 infection. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed coronavirus infection. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features of COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing. Updates are available on CDC's web page.

Preparing Workplaces for a COVID-19 Outbreak

Businesses and employers can prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19. Employers should plan to respond in a flexible way to varying levels of disease transmission in the community and be prepared to refine their business response plans as needed. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), most American workers will likely experience low (caution) or medium exposure risk levels at their job or place of employment (see OSHA guidance for employers for more information about job risk classifications).

Businesses are strongly encouraged to coordinate with state and local health officials so timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses. Local conditions will influence the decisions that public health officials make regarding community-level strategies. CDC has guidance for mitigation strategies according to the level of community transmission or impact of COVID-19.

All employers need to consider how best to decrease the spread of COVID-19 and lower the impact in their workplace. This may include activities in one or more of the following areas:

a. reduce transmission among employees,

b. maintain healthy business operations, and

c. maintain a healthy work environment.

Reduce Transmission Among Employees

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:

- Employees who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Sick employees should follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.

- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow CDC recommended precautions.

Identify where and how workers might be exposed to COVID-19 at work:

- See OSHA COVID-19 webpage for more information on how to protect workers from potential exposures and guidance for employers , including steps to take for jobs according to exposure risk.
- Be aware that some employees may be at higher risk for serious illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions. Consider minimizing face-to-face contact between these employees or assign work tasks that allow them to maintain a distance of six feet from other workers, customers and visitors, or to telework if possible.

Separate sick employees:

- Employees who appear to have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home.
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The employer should instruct fellow employees about how to proceed based on the CDC Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure.

Educate employees about how they can reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Employees can take steps to protect themselves at work and at home. Older people and people with serious chronic medical conditions are at higher risk for complications.
- Follow the policies and procedures of your employer related to illness, cleaning and disinfecting, and work meetings and travel.
- Stay home if you are sick, except to get medical care. Learn what to do if you are sick.
- Inform your supervisor if you have a sick family member at home with COVID-19. Learn what to do if someone in your house is sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Learn more about coughing and sneezing etiquette on the CDC website.
- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs. Dirty surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2 , the cause of COVID-19 and are appropriate for the surface.

- Avoid using other employees' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Practice social distancing by avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible.

Maintain Healthy Business Operations

Identify a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 issues and their impact at the workplace.

Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices.

- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees may want to draft non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies.
- Employers should not require a positive COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the Department of Labor's and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's websites).
- Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources (if available) and community resources as needed. Employees may need additional social, behavioral, and other services, for example, to cope with the death of a loved one.

Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products.

- Be prepared to change your business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize existing customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations if needed).
- Identify alternate supply chains for critical goods and services. Some good and services may be in higher demand or unavailable.
- Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- Talk with business partners about your response plans. Share best practices with other businesses in your communities (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.

Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from childcare programs and K-12 schools.

- Plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace.
- Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher than usual absenteeism.
- Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies.
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.

Consider establishing policies and practices for social distancing. Social distancing should be implemented if recommended by state and local health authorities. Social distancing means avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible (e.g., breakrooms and cafeterias). Strategies that business could use include:

- Implementing flexible worksites (e.g., telework)
- Implementing flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts)
- Increasing physical space between employees at the worksite
- Increasing physical space between employees and customers (e.g., drive through, partitions)
- Implementing flexible meeting and travel options (e.g., postpone non-essential meetings or events)
- Downsizing operations
- Delivering services remotely (e.g. phone, video, or web)
- Delivering products through curbside pick-up or delivery

Employers with more than one business location are encouraged to provide local managers with the authority to take appropriate actions outlined in their COVID-19 response plan based on local conditions.

Maintain a healthy work environment

Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system. This may include some or all of the following activities:

- Increase ventilation rates.
- Increase the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system.

Support respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene for employees, customers, and worksite visitors:

- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
- Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. If hands are visibly dirty, soap and water should be chosen over hand sanitizer. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained.

- Place hand sanitizers in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.
- Place posters that encourage hand hygiene to help stop the spread at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
- Discourage handshaking – encourage the use of other noncontact methods of greeting.
- Direct employees to visit the coughing and sneezing etiquette and clean hands webpage for more information.

Perform routine environmental cleaning and disinfection:

- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.
  - If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
  - For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available here . Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).
- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) can be wiped down by employees before each use. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2 , the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.

Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility:

- If a sick employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations.

Advise employees before traveling to take additional preparations:

- Check the CDC's Traveler's Health Notices for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from countries with travel advisories, and information for aircrew, can be found on the CDC website.
- Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of COVID-19 (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) before starting travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
- If outside the United States, sick employees should follow company policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to assist them with finding an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, and resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

Take care when attending meetings and gatherings:

- Carefully consider whether travel is necessary.
- Consider using videoconferencing or teleconferencing when possible for work-related meetings and gatherings.
- Consider canceling, adjusting, or postponing large work-related meetings or gatherings that can only occur in-person.
- When videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces.

Resources for more information:

CDC Guidance

- COVID-19 Website
- What You Need to Know About COVID-19
- What to Do If You Are Sick With COVID-19
- Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Exposure in Travel-associated or Community Settings
- Health Alert Network
- Travelers' Health Website
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's Small Business International Travel Resource Travel Planner
- Coronavirus Disease 2019 Recommendations for Ships
- Coronavirus Disease 2019 Recommendations for Airlines and Airline crew
- Persons at Higher Risk of Severe Illness

Other Federal Agencies and Partners

- OSHA COVID-19 Website
- OSHA Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

Page last reviewed: April 9, 2020

- Daily Life & Coping
- If You Are Sick
- People Who Need Extra Precautions
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Travel
- Cases, Data, & Surveillance
- Communities, Schools & Workplaces
- Healthcare Professionals
- Health Departments
- Laboratories
- CDC's Response
- Global COVID-19
- Communication Resources

Get Email Updates

To receive email updates about COVID-19, enter your email address:

Email Address

What's this?

Submit

Spanish Resources

Spanish Communication Resources

Social Media Toolkit

Infection Control

FAQ on Infection Control

HAVE QUESTIONS?

Visit CDC-INFO

Call 800-232-4636

Email CDC-INFO

Open 24/7

CDC INFORMATION

About CDC
Jobs
Funding
Policies
File Viewers & Players

Privacy
FOIA
No Fear Act
OIG
Nondiscrimination
Accessibility

CONNECT WITH CDC

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
USA.gov
CDC Website Exit Disclaimer

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE

Español
繁體中文
Tiếng Việt
한국어
Français
Polski
Português
Tagalog
Русский
العربية
Kreyòl Ayisyen
Deutsch
日本語
فارسی

Italiano English

The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20200508013045/https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/comm...

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Coronavirus Disease 2019

Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Plan, Prepare and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019

Older adults and people who have severe underlying chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness.
Find more information here.

Summary of Changes to the Guidance:

Below are changes as of March 21, 2020

- Updated cleaning and disinfection guidance
- Updated best practices for conducting social distancing
- Updated strategies and recommendations that can be implemented now to respond to COVID-19

CDC Industry Guidance

- Resources for Airlines
- Resources for the Ship Industry

OSHA/HHS Guidance

- Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

Purpose

This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The outbreak first started in China, but the virus continues to spread internationally and in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will update this interim guidance as additional information becomes available.

The following interim guidance may help prevent workplace exposures to COVID-19, in non-healthcare settings. (CDC has provided separate guidance for healthcare settings.) This guidance also provides planning considerations for community spread of COVID-19.

To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, use only the guidance described below to determine risk of COVID-19 infection. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed coronavirus infection. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features of COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing. Updates are available on CDC's web page.

Preparing Workplaces for a COVID-19 Outbreak

Businesses and employers can prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19. Employers should plan to respond in a flexible way to varying levels of disease transmission in the community and be prepared to refine their business response plans as needed. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), most American workers will likely experience low (caution) or medium exposure risk levels at their job or place of employment (see OSHA guidance for employers for more information about job risk classifications).

Businesses are strongly encouraged to coordinate with state and local health officials so timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses. Local conditions will influence the decisions that public health officials make regarding community-level strategies. CDC has guidance for mitigation strategies according to the level of community transmission or impact of COVID-19.

All employers need to consider how best to decrease the spread of COVID-19 and lower the impact in their workplace. This may include activities in one or more of the following areas:

a. reduce transmission among employees,
b. maintain healthy business operations, and
c. maintain a healthy work environment.

Reduce Transmission Among Employees

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:

- Employees who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home.

- Sick employees should follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow CDC recommended precautions.

Identify where and how workers might be exposed to COVID-19 at work:

- See OSHA COVID-19 webpage for more information on how to protect workers from potential exposures and guidance for employers , including steps to take for jobs according to exposure risk.
- Be aware that some employees may be at higher risk for serious illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions. Consider minimizing face-to-face contact between these employees or assign work tasks that allow them to maintain a distance of six feet from other workers, customers and visitors, or to telework if possible.

Separate sick employees:

- Employees who appear to have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home.

- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The employer should instruct fellow employees about how to proceed based on the CDC Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure.

Educate employees about how they can reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Employees can take steps to protect themselves at work and at home. Older people and people with serious chronic medical conditions are at higher risk for complications.
- Follow the policies and procedures of your employer related to illness, cleaning and disinfecting, and work meetings and travel.
- Stay home if you are sick, except to get medical care. Learn what to do if you are sick.
- Inform your supervisor if you have a sick family member at home with COVID-19. Learn what to do if someone in your house is sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Learn more about coughing and sneezing etiquette on the CDC website.
- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs. Dirty surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2, the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- Avoid using other employees' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Practice social distancing by avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible.

Maintain Healthy Business Operations

Identify a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 issues and their impact at the workplace.

Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices.

- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees may want to draft non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies.
- Employers should not require a positive COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the Department of Labor's and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's websites).
- Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources (if available) and community resources as needed. Employees may need additional social, behavioral, and other services, for example, to cope with the death of a loved one.

Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products.

- Be prepared to change your business practices if needed to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize existing customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations if needed).
- Identify alternate supply chains for critical goods and services. Some good and services may be in higher demand or unavailable.
- Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- Talk with business partners about your response plans. Share best practices with other businesses in your communities (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.

Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from childcare programs and K-12 schools.

- Plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace.
- Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher than usual absenteeism.
- Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies.
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.

Consider establishing policies and practices for social distancing. Social distancing should be implemented if recommended by state and local health authorities. Social distancing means avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible (e.g., breakrooms and cafeterias). Strategies that business could use include:

- Implementing flexible worksites (e.g., telework)
- Implementing flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts)
- Increasing physical space between employees at the worksite
- Increasing physical space between employees and customers (e.g., drive through, partitions)
- Implementing flexible meeting and travel options (e.g., postpone non-essential meetings or events)
- Downsizing operations
- Delivering services remotely (e.g. phone, video, or web)
- Delivering products through curbside pick-up or delivery

Employers with more than one business location are encouraged to provide local managers with the authority to take appropriate actions outlined in their COVID-19 response plan based on local conditions.

Maintain a healthy work environment

Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system. This may include some or all of the following activities:

- Increase ventilation rates.
- Increase the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system.

Support respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene for employees, customers, and worksite visitors:

- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
- Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. If hands are visibly dirty, soap and water should be chosen over hand sanitizer. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained.
- Place hand sanitizers in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.
- Place posters that encourage hand hygiene to help stop the spread at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
- Discourage handshaking – encourage the use of other noncontact methods of greeting.
- Direct employees to visit the coughing and sneezing etiquette and clean hands webpage for more information.

Perform routine environmental cleaning and disinfection:

- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.
  - If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
  - For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available here . Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).
- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) can be wiped down by employees before each use. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2 , the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.

Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility:

- If a sick employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations.

Advise employees before traveling to take additional preparations:

- Check the CDC's Traveler's Health Notices for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from countries with travel advisories, and information for aircrew, can be found on the CDC website.
- Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of COVID-19 (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) before starting travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
- If outside the United States, sick employees should follow company policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to assist them with finding an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, and resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

Take care when attending meetings and gatherings:

- Carefully consider whether travel is necessary.
- Consider using videoconferencing or teleconferencing when possible for work-related meetings and gatherings.
- Consider canceling, adjusting, or postponing large work-related meetings or gatherings that can only occur in-person.
- When videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces.

Resources for more information:

CDC Guidance

- COVID-19 Website
- What You Need to Know About COVID-19
- What to Do If You Are Sick With COVID-19

- What Workers and Employers Can Do to Manage Workplace Fatigue during COVID-19
- Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Exposure in Travel-associated or Community Settings
- Health Alert Network
- Travelers' Health Website
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's Small Business International Travel Resource Travel Planner
- Coronavirus Disease 2019 Recommendations for Ships
- Coronavirus Disease 2019 Recommendations for Airlines and Airline crew
- Persons at Higher Risk of Severe Illness
- Employees: How to Cope with Job Stress and Build Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Other Federal Agencies and Partners

- OSHA COVID-19 Website
- OSHA Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

Page last reviewed: May 5, 2020

The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20200703004925/https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/comm...

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Coronavirus Disease 2019

Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), May 2020

Plan, Prepare and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019

Updated May 6, 2020

Summary of Changes to the Guidance:

Below are changes as of May 6, 2020

- Updated strategies and recommendations for employers responding to COVID-19, including those seeking to resume normal or phased business operations:
  - Conducting daily health checks
  - Conducting a hazard assessment of the workplace
  - Encouraging employees to wear cloth face coverings in the workplace, if appropriate
  - Implementing policies and practices for social distancing in the workplace
  - Improving the building ventilation system
- A table outlining the engineering controls, administrative controls, and personal protective equipment (PPE) that employers may use to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace

More Changes

CDC Industry Guidance

- Resources for Airlines
- Resources for the Ship Industry
- Employers with Workers at High Risk

OSHA/HHS Guidance

- Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

Resuming Business Toolkit



PDF Download

Purpose

This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The outbreak first started in China, but the virus continues to spread internationally and in the United States. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other characteristics of COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing. Updates are available on CDC's web page at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/. CDC will update this interim guidance as additional information becomes available.

This interim guidance may help prevent workplace exposures to COVID-19 in non-healthcare settings (separate guidance is available for healthcare settings). CDC has also provided guidance for critical infrastructure workers who may have had exposure to a person known or suspected to have COVID-19. Unless otherwise specified, this interim guidance for businesses and employers applies to critical infrastructure workplaces as well.

Role of Businesses and Employers in Responding to COVID-19

Businesses and employers can prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19 within the workplace. Employers should respond in a way that takes into account the level of disease transmission in their communities and revise their business response plans as needed. Employers should follow the White House Guidelines for Opening Up America Again, a phased approach based on current levels of transmission and healthcare capacity at the state or local level, as part of resuming business operations. Business operation decisions should be based on both the level of disease transmission in the community and your readiness to protect the safety and health of your employees and customers.

Businesses and employers are encouraged to coordinate with state and local health officials to obtain timely and accurate information to inform appropriate responses. Local conditions will influence the decisions that public health officials make regarding community-level strategies. CDC has guidance for mitigation strategies according to the level of community transmission or impact of COVID-19.

As an employer, if your business operations were interrupted, resuming normal or phased activities presents an opportunity to update your COVID-19 preparedness, response, and control plans. All employers should implement and update as necessary a plan that:

- Is specific to your workplace,
- identifies all areas and job tasks with potential exposures to COVID-19, and
- includes control measures to eliminate or reduce such exposures.

Talk with your employees about planned changes and seek their input. Additionally, collaborate with employees and unions to effectively communicate important COVID-19 information.

See the OSHA COVID-19 guidance for more information on how to protect workers from potential exposures, according to their exposure risk. Plans should consider that employees may be able to spread COVID-19 even if they do not show symptoms.

All employers need to consider how best to decrease the spread of COVID-19 and lower the impact in your workplace. This should include activities to:

- prevent and reduce transmission among employees,
- maintain healthy business operations, and
- maintain a healthy work environment.

Prevent and Reduce Transmission Among Employees

Monitor federal, state, and local public health communications about COVID-19 regulations, guidance, and recommendations and ensure that workers have access to that information. Frequently check the CDC COVID-19 website.

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:

- Employees who have symptoms should notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Sick employees should follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, in consultation with healthcare providers.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow CDC recommended precautions.

Consider conducting daily in-person or virtual health checks (e.g., symptom and/or temperature screening) of employees before they enter the facility, in accordance with state and local public health authorities and, if available, your occupational health services:

- If implementing in-person health checks, conduct them safely and respectfully. Employers may use social distancing, barrier or partition controls, or personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect the screener. However,

reliance on PPE alone is a less effective control and is more difficult to implement, given PPE shortages and training requirements.
    - See the "Should we be screening employees for COVID-19 symptoms?" section of General Business Frequently Asked Questions as a guide.
- Complete the health checks in a way that helps maintain social distancing guidelines, such as providing multiple screening entries into the building.
- Follow guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission regarding confidentiality of medical records from health checks.
- To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, make employee health screenings as private as possible. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin and be sure to maintain confidentiality of each individual's medical status and history.

Identify where and how workers might be exposed to COVID-19 at work. Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace. Conduct a thorough hazard assessment of the workplace to identify potential workplace hazards related to COVID-19. Use appropriate combinations of controls from the hierarchy of controls to limit the spread of COVID-19, including engineering controls, workplace administrative policies, and personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect workers from the identified hazards (see table below):

- Conduct a thorough hazard assessment to determine if workplace hazards are present, or are likely to be present, and determine what type of controls or PPE are needed for specific job duties.
- When engineering and administrative controls cannot be implemented or are not fully protective, employers are required by OSHA standards to:
    - Determine what PPE is needed for their workers' specific job duties,
    - Select and provide appropriate PPE to the workers at no cost, and
    - Train their workers on its correct use.
- Encourage workers to wear a cloth face covering at work if the hazard assessment has determined that they do not require PPE, such as a respirator or medical facemask for protection.
    - CDC recommends wearing a cloth face covering as a measure to contain the wearer's respiratory droplets and help protect their co-workers and members of the general public.
    - Cloth face coverings are not considered PPE. They may prevent workers, including those who don't know they have the virus, from spreading it to others but may not protect the wearers from exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Remind employees and customers that CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, **especially** in areas of significant community-based transmission. Wearing a cloth face covering, however, does not replace the need to practice social distancing.
- See the OSHA COVID-19 webpage for more information on how to protect workers from potential COVID-19 exposures and guidance for employers, including steps to take for jobs according to exposure risk.

Separate sick employees:

- Employees who appear to have symptoms upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors, and sent home.

- Have a procedure in place for the safe transport of an employee who becomes sick while at work. The employee may need to be transported home or to a healthcare provider.

Take action if an employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 infection:

In most cases, you do not need to shut down your facility. If it has been less than 7 days since the sick employee has been in the facility, close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the sick person:

- Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for other employees being exposed to respiratory droplets. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- During this waiting period, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in these areas.

If it has been 7 days or more since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces in the facility.

Follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations:

- Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water before disinfecting them.
- To disinfect surfaces, use products that meet EPA criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2 , the virus that causes COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- Always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used when you are cleaning and disinfecting.
- You may need to wear additional PPE depending on the setting and disinfectant product you are using. For each product you use, consult and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.

Determine which employees may have been exposed to the virus and may need to take additional precautions:

- Inform employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) .
- Most workplaces should follow the Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure and instruct potentially exposed employees to stay home for 14 days, telework if possible, and self-monitor for symptoms.
- Critical infrastructure workplaces should follow the guidance on Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19. Employers in critical infrastructure also have an obligation to manage potentially exposed workers' return to work in ways that best protect the health of those workers, their co-workers, and the general public.

Educate employees about steps they can take to protect themselves at work and at home:

- Encourage employees to follow any new policies or procedures related to illness, cleaning and disinfecting, and work meetings and travel.
- Advise employees to:
- Stay home if they are sick, except to get medical care, and to learn what to do if they are sick.

- Inform their supervisor if they have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 and to learn what to do if someone in their home is sick.
- Wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or to use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. Inform employees that if their hands are visibly dirty, they should use soap and water over hand sanitizer. Key times for employees to clean their hands include:
    - Before and after work shifts
    - Before and after work breaks
    - After blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing
    - After using the restroom
    - Before eating or preparing food
    - After putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use the inside of their elbow. Throw used tissues into no-touch trash cans and immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Learn more about coughing and sneezing etiquette on the CDC website.
- Practice routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs. Dirty surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2 , the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- Avoid using other employees' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. Clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Practice social distancing by avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (at least 6 feet) from others when possible.

For employees who commute to work using public transportation or ride sharing, consider offering the following support:

- If feasible, offer employees incentives to use forms of transportation that minimize close contact with others (e.g., biking, walking, driving or riding by car either alone or with household members).
- Ask employees to follow the CDC guidance on how to protect yourself when using transportation.
- Allow employees to shift their hours so they can commute during less busy times.
- Ask employees to clean their hands as soon as possible after their trip.

Maintain Healthy Business Operations

Identify a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 issues and their impact at the workplace.

Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices:

- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees should consider drafting non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies.
- Employers should not require a COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work.
    - Under the American's with Disabilities Act, employers are permitted to require a doctor's note from your employees to verify that they are healthy and able to return to work. However, as a practical matter, be aware that healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner. Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care and can follow CDC recommendations to determine when to discontinue home isolation and return to work.
    - The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has established guidance regarding Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act . The guidance enables employers to take steps to protect workers consistent with CDC guidance, including requiring workers to stay home when necessary to address the direct threat of spreading COVID-19 to others.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that your policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the Department of Labor's and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's websites).
- Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources, if available, and community resources as needed. Employees may need additional social, behavioral, and other services, for example, to help them manage stress and cope.

Protect employees at higher risk for severe illness through supportive policies and practices. Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

- Support and encourage options to telework, if available.
- Consider offering vulnerable workers duties that minimize their contact with customers and other employees (e.g., restocking shelves rather than working as a cashier), if the worker agrees to this.
- Offer flexible options such as telework to employees. This will eliminate the need for employees living in higher transmission areas to travel to workplaces in lower transmission areas and vice versa.
- Ensure that any other businesses and employers sharing the same workspace also follow this guidance.

Communicate supportive workplace polices clearly, frequently, and via multiple methods. Employers may need to communicate with non-English speakers in their preferred languages.

- Train workers on how implementing any new policies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 may affect existing health and safety practices.

- Communicate to any contractors or on-site visitors about changes that have been made to help control the spread of COVID-19. Ensure that they have the information and capability to comply with those policies.
- Create and test communication systems that employees can use to self-report if they are sick and that you can use to notify employees of exposures and closures.
- Consider using a hotline or another method for employees to voice concerns anonymously.

Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products.

- Be prepared to change your business practices, if needed, to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize existing customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations).
- Identify alternate supply chains for critical goods and services. Some goods and services may be in higher demand or unavailable.
- If other companies provide your business with contract or temporary employees, talk with them about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- Talk with business partners about your response efforts. Share best practices with other businesses in your communities (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.
- When resuming onsite business operations, identify and prioritize job functions for continuous operations. Minimize the number of workers present at worksites by resuming business operations in phases, balancing the need to protect workers with support for continuing operations.

Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children until childcare programs and K-12 schools resume.

- Plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace.
- Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher-than-usual absenteeism.
- Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies.
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.

Establish policies and practices for social distancing. Alter your workspace to help workers and customers maintain social distancing and physically separate employees from each other and from customers, when possible. Here are some strategies that businesses can use:

- Implement flexible worksites (e.g., telework).
- Implement flexible work hours (e.g., rotate or stagger shifts to limit the number of employees in the workplace at the same time).
- Increase physical space between employees at the worksite by modifying the workspace.
- Increase physical space between employees and customers (e.g., drive-through service, physical barriers such as partitions).

- Use signs, tape marks, or other visual cues such as decals or colored tape on the floor, placed 6 feet apart, to indicate where to stand when physical barriers are not possible.
- Implement flexible meeting and travel options (e.g., postpone non-essential meetings or events in accordance with state and local regulations and guidance).
- Close or limit access to common areas where employees are likely to congregate and interact.
- Prohibit handshaking.
- Deliver services remotely (e.g., phone, video, or web).
- Adjust your business practices to reduce close contact with customers — for example, by providing drive-through service, click-and-collect online shopping, shop-by-phone, curbside pickup, and delivery options, where feasible.
- Move the electronic payment terminal/credit card reader farther away from the cashier, if possible, to increase the distance between the customer and the cashier.
- Shift primary stocking activities to off-peak or after hours, when possible, to reduce contact with customers.

If you have more than one business location, consider giving local managers the authority to take appropriate actions outlined in their COVID-19 response plans based on their local conditions.

Maintain a healthy work environment

Since COVID-19 may be spread by those with no symptoms, businesses and employers should evaluate and institute controls according to the hierarchy of controls to protect their employees and members of the general public.

Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system. This may include some or all of the following activities:

- Increase ventilation rates.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.
- Increase outdoor air ventilation, using caution in highly polluted areas. With a lower occupancy level in the building, this increases the effective dilution ventilation per person.
- Disable demand-controlled ventilation (DCV).
- Further open minimum outdoor air dampers (as high as 100%) to reduce or eliminate recirculation. In mild weather, this will not affect thermal comfort or humidity. However, this may be difficult to do in cold or hot weather.
- Improve central air filtration to the MERV-13 or the highest compatible with the filter rack, and seal edges of the filter to limit bypass.
- Check filters to ensure they are within service life and appropriately installed.
- Keep systems running longer hours, 24/7 if possible, to enhance air exchanges in the building space.

Note: Some of the above recommendations are based on the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) Guidance for Building Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic . Review these ASHRAE guidelines for further information on ventilation recommendations.

Ensure the safety of your building water system and devices after a prolonged shutdown:

- Follow the CDC Guidance for Building Water Systems, which describes 8 steps to take before you reopen your business or building.

Give employees, customers, and visitors what they need to clean their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes:

- Provide tissues and no-touch trash cans.
- Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained.
- Ideally, place touchless hand sanitizer stations in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.
- Place posters that encourage hand hygiene to help stop the spread at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen. This should include signs for non-English speakers, as needed.
- Discourage handshaking. Encourage employees to use other noncontact methods of greeting.
- Direct employees to visit CDC's coughing and sneezing etiquette and clean hands webpage for more information.

Perform routine cleaning:

- Follow the Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting to develop, implement, and maintain a plan to perform regular cleanings to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.
    - If surfaces are dirty, clean them using a detergent or soap and water before you disinfect them.
    - For disinfection, most common, EPA-registered, household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available on the EPA website. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method, and contact time).
- Discourage workers from using each other's phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible.
- Provide disposable disinfecting wipes so that employees can wipe down commonly used surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) before each use.
- Store and use disinfectants in a responsible and appropriate manner according to the label.
- Do not mix bleach or other cleaning and disinfection products together. This can cause fumes that could be very dangerous to breathe in.
- Advise employees to always wear gloves appropriate for the chemicals being used when they are cleaning and disinfecting and that they may need additional PPE based on the setting and product.

Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility:

- If a sick employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations.

Limit travel and advise employees if they must travel to take additional precautions and preparations:

- Minimize non-essential travel and consider resuming non-essential travel in accordance with state and local regulations and guidance.
- Check the CDC's Traveler's Health Notices for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country where you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from countries with travel advisories, and information for aircrew, can be found on the CDC website.
- Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of COVID-19 before starting travel and to notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
- If they are outside the United States, sick employees should follow company policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to help them find an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, or resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

Minimize risk to employees when planning meetings and gatherings:

- Use videoconferencing or teleconferencing when possible for work-related meetings and gatherings.
- Cancel, adjust, or postpone large work-related meetings or gatherings that can only occur in-person in accordance with state and local regulations and guidance.
- When videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces continuing to maintain a distance of 6 feet apart and wear cloth face coverings.

The table below presents examples of controls to implement in your workplace. The most effective controls are those that rely on engineering solutions, followed by administrative controls, then PPE. PPE is the least effective control method and the most difficult to implement. Worksites may have to implement multiple complementary controls from these columns to effectively control the hazard.

Employers: Use the table below to implement the most appropriate controls for your workplace

TABLE: Example Controls to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in Work Environments		
Engineering	**Administrative**	**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Facilities and Equipment

- Assess job hazards for feasibility of engineering controls
- Ensure ventilation and water systems operate properly
- Alter workspaces to maintain social distancing. Examples include:
  - Configure partitions as a barrier shield
  - Move electronic payment reader away from cashier
  - Use verbal announcements, signage, and visual cues to promote social distancing
  - Remove/rearrange furniture
  - Provide remote shopping alternatives (e.g., delivery, pick-up)

Management and Communications

- Monitor state and local public health communications about COVID-19
- Encourage sick workers to report symptoms, stay home, and follow CDC guidance
- Develop strategies to:
  - manage worker concerns
  - communicate with workers
- Remind workers of available support services
- Communicate to partners, suppliers, other contractors on policies and practices
- Encourage social distancing and the use of cloth face coverings (if appropriate) in the workplace
- Use technology to promote social distancing (e.g., telework and virtual meetings)
- Cancel group events
- Close/limit use of shared spaces
- Ask customers who are ill to stay home
- Consider policies that encourage flexible sick leave and alternative work schedules.
- Schedule stocking during off-peak hours

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, (e.g., counters, shelving, displays)
- Provide employees with disposable disinfectant wipes, cleaner, or sprays that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19

PPE

- Conduct workplace hazard assessment
- Determine what PPE is needed for their workers' specific job duties based on hazards and other controls present
- Select and provide appropriate PPE to the workers at no cost.

	Training Provide employees with training on: • Policies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 • General hygiene • Symptoms, what to do if sick • Cleaning and disinfection • Cloth face covers • Social distancing • Use of PPE • Safe work practices • Stress management	

Resources for more information:

CDC Guidance

- COVID-19 Website
- Business and Workplaces webpage
- General Business Frequently Asked Questions
- Small Business
- Transportation and Delivery
- What You Need to Know About COVID-19
- What to Do If You Are Sick With COVID-19
- What Workers and Employers Can Do to Manage Workplace Fatigue during COVID-19
- People at Higher Risk of Severe Illness
- Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposures
- Public Health Recommendations after Travel-Associated COVID-19 Exposure
- Health Alert Network
- Travelers' Health Website
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's Small Business International Travel Resource Travel Planner
- Managing Workplace Fatigue

Other Federal Agencies and Partners

- OSHA COVID-19 Website

- OSHA Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

Below are changes as of March 21, 2020

- Updated cleaning and disinfection guidance
- Updated best practices for conducting social distancing
- Updated strategies and recommendations that can be implemented now to respond to COVID-19

Page last reviewed: May 6, 2020

The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20201215012408/https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communi...

Plan, Prepare and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019

Updated Dec. 4, 2020 Languages

Summary of Changes to the Guidance:

Below are changes as of May 6, 2020

- Updated strategies and recommendations for employers responding to COVID-19, including those seeking to resume normal or phased business operations:
  - Conducting daily health checks
  - Conducting a hazard assessment of the workplace
  - Encouraging employees to wear cloth face coverings in the workplace, if appropriate
  - Implementing policies and practices for social distancing in the workplace
  - Improving the building ventilation system
- A table outlining the engineering controls, administrative controls, and personal protective equipment (PPE) that employers may use to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace

More Changes

CDC Industry Guidance

- Resources for Airlines
- Resources for the Ship Industry
- Employers with Workers at High Risk

OSHA/HHS Guidance

- Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

Resuming Business Toolkit

PDF Download

Purpose

This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The outbreak first started in China, but the virus continues to spread internationally and in the United States. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other characteristics of COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing. Updates are available on CDC's web page at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/. CDC will update this interim guidance as additional information becomes available.

This interim guidance may help prevent workplace exposures to COVID-19 in non-healthcare settings (separate guidance is available for healthcare settings). CDC has also provided guidance for critical infrastructure workers who may have had exposure to a person known or suspected to have COVID-19. Unless otherwise specified, this interim guidance for businesses and employers applies to critical infrastructure workplaces as well.

Role of Businesses and Employers in Responding to COVID-19

Businesses and employers can prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19 within the workplace. Employers should respond in a way that takes into account the level of disease transmission in their communities and revise their business response plans as needed. Employers should follow the White House Guidelines for Opening Up America Again, a phased approach based on current levels of transmission and healthcare capacity at the state or local level, as part of resuming business operations. Business operation decisions should be based on both the level of disease transmission in the community and your readiness to protect the safety and health of your employees and customers.

Businesses and employers are encouraged to coordinate with state and local health officials to obtain timely and accurate information to inform appropriate responses. Local conditions will influence the decisions that public health officials make regarding community-level strategies. CDC has guidance for mitigation strategies according to the level of community transmission or impact of COVID-19.

As an employer, if your business operations were interrupted, resuming normal or phased activities presents an opportunity to update your COVID-19 preparedness, response, and control plans. All employers should implement and update as necessary a plan that:

- Is specific to your workplace,
- identifies all areas and job tasks with potential exposures to COVID-19, and
- includes control measures to eliminate or reduce such exposures.

Talk with your employees about planned changes and seek their input. Additionally, collaborate with employees and unions to effectively communicate important COVID-19 information.

See the OSHA COVID-19 guidance for more information on how to protect workers from potential exposures, according to their exposure risk. Plans should consider that employees may be able to spread COVID-19 even if they do not show symptoms.

All employers need to consider how best to decrease the spread of COVID-19 and lower the impact in your workplace. This should include activities to:

- prevent and reduce transmission among employees,
- maintain healthy business operations, and
- maintain a healthy work environment.

Prevent and Reduce Transmission Among Employees

Monitor federal, state, and local public health communications about COVID-19 regulations, guidance, and recommendations and ensure that workers have access to that information. Frequently check the CDC COVID-19 website.

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:

- Employees who have symptoms should notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Sick employees should follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, in consultation with healthcare providers.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow CDC recommended precautions.

Consider conducting daily in-person or virtual health checks (e.g., symptom and/or temperature screening) of employees before they enter the facility, in accordance with state and local public health authorities and, if available, your occupational health services:

- If implementing in-person health checks, conduct them safely and respectfully. Employers may use social distancing, barrier or partition controls, or personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect the screener. However, reliance on PPE alone is a less effective control and is more difficult to implement, given PPE shortages and training requirements.
  - See the "Should we be screening employees for COVID-19 symptoms?" section of General Business Frequently Asked Questions as a guide.
- Complete the health checks in a way that helps maintain social distancing guidelines, such as providing multiple screening entries into the building.
- Follow guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission regarding confidentiality of medical records from health checks.
- To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, make employee health screenings as private as possible. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin and be sure to maintain confidentiality of each individual's medical status and history.

Identify where and how workers might be exposed to COVID-19 at work. Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace. Conduct a thorough hazard assessment of the workplace to identify potential workplace hazards related to COVID-19. Use appropriate combinations of controls from the hierarchy of controls to limit the spread of COVID-19, including engineering controls, workplace administrative policies, and personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect workers from the identified hazards (see table below):

- Conduct a thorough hazard assessment to determine if workplace hazards are present, or are likely to be present, and determine what type of controls or PPE are needed for specific job duties.
- When engineering and administrative controls cannot be implemented or are not fully protective, employers are required by OSHA standards to:
  - Determine what PPE is needed for their workers' specific job duties,
  - Select and provide appropriate PPE to the workers at no cost, and
  - Train their workers on its correct use.
- Encourage workers to wear a cloth face covering at work if the hazard assessment has determined that they do not require PPE, such as a respirator or medical facemask for protection.
  - CDC recommends wearing a cloth face covering as a measure to contain the wearer's respiratory droplets and help protect their co-workers and members of the general public.
  - Cloth face coverings are not considered PPE. They may prevent workers, including those who don't know they have the virus, from spreading it to others but may not protect the wearers from exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Remind employees and customers that CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, **especially** in areas of significant community-based transmission. Wearing a cloth face covering, however, does not replace the need to practice social distancing.
- See the OSHA COVID-19 webpage for more information on how to protect workers from potential COVID-19 exposures and guidance for employers, including steps to take for jobs according to exposure risk.

Separate sick employees:

- Employees who appear to have symptoms upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors, and sent home.
- Have a procedure in place for the safe transport of an employee who becomes sick while at work. The employee may need to be transported home or to a healthcare provider.

Take action if an employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 infection:

In most cases, you do not need to shut down your facility. If it has been less than 7 days since the sick employee has been in the facility, close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the sick person:

- Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for other employees being exposed to respiratory droplets. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- During this waiting period, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in these areas.

If it has been 7 days or more since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces in the facility.

Follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations:

- Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water before disinfecting them.
- To disinfect surfaces, use products that meet EPA criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2 , the virus that causes COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- Always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used when you are cleaning and disinfecting.
- You may need to wear additional PPE depending on the setting and disinfectant product you are using. For each product you use, consult and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.

Determine which employees may have been exposed to the virus and may need to take additional precautions:

- Inform employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) .
- Most workplaces should follow the Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure and instruct potentially exposed employees to stay home for 14 days, telework if possible, and self-monitor for symptoms. The best way to protect yourself and others is to stay home for 14 days if you think you've been exposed to someone who has COVID-19. Check your local health department's website for information about options in your area to possibly shorten this quarantine period.
- Critical infrastructure workplaces should follow the guidance on Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19. Employers in critical infrastructure also have an obligation to manage potentially exposed workers' return to work in ways that best protect the health of those workers, their co-workers, and the general public.

Educate employees about steps they can take to protect themselves at work and at home:

- Encourage employees to follow any new policies or procedures related to illness, cleaning and disinfecting, and work meetings and travel.
- Advise employees to:
- Stay home if they are sick, except to get medical care, and to learn what to do if they are sick.
- Inform their supervisor if they have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 and to learn what to do if someone in their home is sick.
- Wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or to use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. Inform employees that if their hands are visibly dirty, they should use soap and water over hand sanitizer. Key times for employees to clean their hands include:
  - Before and after work shifts
  - Before and after work breaks
  - After blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing
  - After using the restroom
  - Before eating or preparing food
  - After putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use the inside of their elbow. Throw used tissues into no-touch trash cans and immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Learn more about coughing and sneezing etiquette on the CDC website.

- Practice routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs. Dirty surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2 , the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- Avoid using other employees' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. Clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Practice social distancing by avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (at least 6 feet) from others when possible.

For employees who commute to work using public transportation or ride sharing, consider offering the following support:

- If feasible, offer employees incentives to use forms of transportation that minimize close contact with others (e.g., biking, walking, driving or riding by car either alone or with household members).
- Ask employees to follow the CDC guidance on how to protect yourself when using transportation.
- Allow employees to shift their hours so they can commute during less busy times.
- Ask employees to clean their hands as soon as possible after their trip.

Maintain Healthy Business Operations

Identify a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 issues and their impact at the workplace.

Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices:

- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.
- The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA or Act) requires certain employers to provide their employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19.
- Employers with fewer than 500 employees are eligible for 100% tax credits for Families First Coronavirus Response Act COVID-19 paid leave provided through December 31, 2020, up to certain limits.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees should consider drafting non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies.
- Employers should not require a COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work.
  - Under the American's with Disabilities Act, employers are permitted to require a doctor's note from your employees to verify that they are healthy and able to return to work. However, as a practical matter, be aware that healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner. Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can

recover at home without medical care and can follow CDC recommendations to determine when to discontinue home isolation and return to work.

- The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has established guidance regarding Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act . The guidance enables employers to take steps to protect workers consistent with CDC guidance, including requiring workers to stay home when necessary to address the direct threat of spreading COVID-19 to others.

- Review human resources policies to make sure that your policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the Department of Labor's and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's websites).
- Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources, if available, and community resources as needed. Employees may need additional social, behavioral, and other services, for example, to help them manage stress and cope.

Protect employees at higher risk for severe illness through supportive policies and practices. Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

- Support and encourage options to telework, if available.
- Consider offering vulnerable workers duties that minimize their contact with customers and other employees (e.g., restocking shelves rather than working as a cashier), if the worker agrees to this.
- Offer flexible options such as telework to employees. This will eliminate the need for employees living in higher transmission areas to travel to workplaces in lower transmission areas and vice versa.
- Ensure that any other businesses and employers sharing the same workspace also follow this guidance.

Communicate supportive workplace polices clearly, frequently, and via multiple methods. Employers may need to communicate with non-English speakers in their preferred languages.

- Train workers on how implementing any new policies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 may affect existing health and safety practices.
- Communicate to any contractors or on-site visitors about changes that have been made to help control the spread of COVID-19. Ensure that they have the information and capability to comply with those policies.
- Create and test communication systems that employees can use to self-report if they are sick and that you can use to notify employees of exposures and closures.
- Consider using a hotline or another method for employees to voice concerns anonymously.

Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products.

- Be prepared to change your business practices, if needed, to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize existing customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations).
- Identify alternate supply chains for critical goods and services. Some goods and services may be in higher demand or unavailable.
- If other companies provide your business with contract or temporary employees, talk with them about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- Talk with business partners about your response efforts. Share best practices with other businesses in your communities (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce, and associations to improve

community response efforts.

- When resuming onsite business operations, identify and prioritize job functions for continuous operations. Minimize the number of workers present at worksites by resuming business operations in phases, balancing the need to protect workers with support for continuing operations.

Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children until childcare programs and K-12 schools resume.

- Plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace.
- Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher-than-usual absenteeism.
- Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies.
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.

Establish policies and practices for social distancing. Alter your workspace to help workers and customers maintain social distancing and physically separate employees from each other and from customers, when possible. Here are some strategies that businesses can use:

- Implement flexible worksites (e.g., telework).
- Implement flexible work hours (e.g., rotate or stagger shifts to limit the number of employees in the workplace at the same time).
- Increase physical space between employees at the worksite by modifying the workspace.
- Increase physical space between employees and customers (e.g., drive-through service, physical barriers such as partitions).
- Use signs, tape marks, or other visual cues such as decals or colored tape on the floor, placed 6 feet apart, to indicate where to stand when physical barriers are not possible.
- Implement flexible meeting and travel options (e.g., postpone non-essential meetings or events in accordance with state and local regulations and guidance).
- Close or limit access to common areas where employees are likely to congregate and interact.
- Prohibit handshaking.
- Deliver services remotely (e.g., phone, video, or web).
- Adjust your business practices to reduce close contact with customers — for example, by providing drive-through service, click-and-collect online shopping, shop-by-phone, curbside pickup, and delivery options, where feasible.
- Move the electronic payment terminal/credit card reader farther away from the cashier, if possible, to increase the distance between the customer and the cashier.
- Shift primary stocking activities to off-peak or after hours, when possible, to reduce contact with customers.

If you have more than one business location, consider giving local managers the authority to take appropriate actions outlined in their COVID-19 response plans based on their local conditions.

Maintain a healthy work environment

Since COVID-19 may be spread by those with no symptoms, businesses and employers should evaluate and institute controls according to the hierarchy of controls to protect their employees and members of the general public.

Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system. This may include some or all of the following activities:

- Increase ventilation rates.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.
- Increase outdoor air ventilation, using caution in highly polluted areas. With a lower occupancy level in the building, this increases the effective dilution ventilation per person.
- Disable demand-controlled ventilation (DCV).
- Further open minimum outdoor air dampers (as high as 100%) to reduce or eliminate recirculation. In mild weather, this will not affect thermal comfort or humidity. However, this may be difficult to do in cold or hot weather.
- Improve central air filtration to the MERV-13 or the highest compatible with the filter rack, and seal edges of the filter to limit bypass.
- Check filters to ensure they are within service life and appropriately installed.
- Keep systems running longer hours, 24/7 if possible, to enhance air exchanges in the building space.

Note: Some of the above recommendations are based on the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) Guidance for Building Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic . Review these ASHRAE guidelines for further information on ventilation recommendations.

Ensure the safety of your building water system and devices after a prolonged shutdown:

- Follow the CDC Guidance for Building Water Systems, which describes 8 steps to take before you reopen your business or building.

Give employees, customers, and visitors what they need to clean their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes:

- Provide tissues and no-touch trash cans.
- Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained.
- Ideally, place touchless hand sanitizer stations in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.
- Place posters that encourage hand hygiene to help stop the spread at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen. This should include signs for non-English speakers, as needed.
- Discourage handshaking. Encourage employees to use other noncontact methods of greeting.
- Direct employees to visit CDC's coughing and sneezing etiquette and clean hands webpage for more information.

Perform routine cleaning:

- Follow the Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting to develop, implement, and maintain a plan to perform regular cleanings to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.
  - If surfaces are dirty, clean them using a detergent or soap and water before you disinfect them.
  - For disinfection, most common, EPA-registered, household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available on the EPA website. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method, and contact time).
- Discourage workers from using each other's phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible.
- Provide disposable disinfecting wipes so that employees can wipe down commonly used surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) before each use.
- Store and use disinfectants in a responsible and appropriate manner according to the label.
- Do not mix bleach or other cleaning and disinfection products together. This can cause fumes that could be very dangerous to breathe in.
- Advise employees to always wear gloves appropriate for the chemicals being used when they are cleaning and disinfecting and that they may need additional PPE based on the setting and product.

Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility:

- If a sick employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations.

Limit travel and advise employees if they must travel to take additional precautions and preparations:

- Minimize non-essential travel and consider resuming non-essential travel in accordance with state and local regulations and guidance.
- Check the CDC's Traveler's Health Notices for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country where you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from countries with travel advisories, and information for aircrew, can be found on the CDC website.
- Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of COVID-19 before starting travel and to notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
- If they are outside the United States, sick employees should follow company policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to help them find an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, or resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

Minimize risk to employees when planning meetings and gatherings:

- Use videoconferencing or teleconferencing when possible for work-related meetings and gatherings.

- Cancel, adjust, or postpone large work-related meetings or gatherings that can only occur in-person in accordance with state and local regulations and guidance.
- When videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces continuing to maintain a distance of 6 feet apart and wear cloth face coverings.

The table below presents examples of controls to implement in your workplace. The most effective controls are those that rely on engineering solutions, followed by administrative controls, then PPE. PPE is the least effective control method and the most difficult to implement. Worksites may have to implement multiple complementary controls from these columns to effectively control the hazard.

Employers: Use the table below to implement the most appropriate controls for your workplace

TABLE: Example Controls to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in Work Environments		
Engineering	Administrative	Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Facilities and Equipment

- Assess job hazards for feasibility of engineering controls
- Ensure ventilation and water systems operate properly
- Alter workspaces to maintain social distancing. Examples include:
  - Configure partitions as a barrier shield
  - Move electronic payment reader away from cashier
  - Use verbal announcements, signage, and visual cues to promote social distancing
  - Remove/rearrange furniture
  - Provide remote shopping alternatives (e.g., delivery, pick-up)

Management and Communications

- Monitor state and local public health communications about COVID-19
- Encourage sick workers to report symptoms, stay home, and follow CDC guidance
- Develop strategies to:
  - manage worker concerns
  - communicate with workers
- Remind workers of available support services
- Communicate to partners, suppliers, other contractors on policies and practices
- Encourage social distancing and the use of cloth face coverings (if appropriate) in the workplace
- Use technology to promote social distancing (e.g., telework and virtual meetings)
- Cancel group events
- Close/limit use of shared spaces
- Ask customers who are ill to stay home
- Consider policies that encourage flexible sick leave and alternative work schedules.
- Schedule stocking during off-peak hours

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, (e.g., counters, shelving, displays)
- Provide employees with disposable disinfectant wipes, cleaner, or sprays that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19

Training

PPE

- Conduct workplace hazard assessment
- Determine what PPE is needed for their workers' specific job duties based on hazards and other controls present
- Select and provide appropriate PPE to the workers at no cost.

	Provide employees with training on: • Policies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 • General hygiene • Symptoms, what to do if sick • Cleaning and disinfection • Cloth face covers • Social distancing • Use of PPE • Safe work practices • Stress management	

Resources for more information:

CDC Guidance

- COVID-19 Website
- Business and Workplaces webpage
- General Business Frequently Asked Questions
- Small Business
- Transportation and Delivery
- What You Need to Know About COVID-19
- What to Do If You Are Sick With COVID-19
- What Workers and Employers Can Do to Manage Workplace Fatigue during COVID-19
- People at Higher Risk of Severe Illness
- Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposures
- Public Health Recommendations after Travel-Associated COVID-19 Exposure
- Health Alert Network
- Travelers' Health Website
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's Small Business International Travel Resource Travel Planner
- Managing Workplace Fatigue

Other Federal Agencies and Partners

- OSHA COVID-19 Website
- OSHA Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

Below are changes as of March 21, 2020

- Updated cleaning and disinfection guidance
- Updated best practices for conducting social distancing
- Updated strategies and recommendations that can be implemented now to respond to COVID-19

Last Updated Dec. 4, 2020

Community, Work & School

Health Equity +

Community Mitigation Framework

Cleaning & Disinfecting +

Workplaces & Businesses +

Schools & Child Care +

Colleges & Universities +

Parks, Sports & Recreation +

Community Organizations & Gatherings +

Shared & Congregate Housing +

Retirement Communities +

Homeless Populations +

Correctional & Detention Facilities +

Tribal Communities +

Guidance Documents

Communication Resources +

What's New

Get Email Updates

To receive email updates about COVID-19, enter your email address:

Email Address

What's this?

Submit

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE

Español

繁體中文

Tiếng Việt

한국어

Français

Polski

Português

Italiano

Tagalog

Русский

العربية

Kreyòl Ayisyen

Deutsch

日本語

فارسی

English

CONTACT CDC

ABOUT CDC

POLICIES

LANGUAGES

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

USA.gov

The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20210107040434/https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communi...

Plan, Prepare and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019

Updated Jan. 4, 2021 Languages

Summary of Recent Changes

Updates as of Dec 31, 2020

As of December 31, 2020

- Expanded section on in-person or virtual health checks
- Added a section on considerations for testing for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19
- Addressed shortened quarantine options. Shortening quarantine may increase willingness to adhere to public health recommendations; however, shortened quarantine may be less effective in preventing transmission of COVID-19 than the currently recommended 14-day quarantine.
- Clarified that all workers should wear masks (unless respirators or facemasks are required) in accordance with CDC and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidance and any state or local requirements
- Clarified that, in addition to preventing the wearer's respiratory droplets from reaching others, masks might be protective to the wearer

View Previous Updates

Purpose

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person, especially between people who are physically near each other (within about 6 feet). People who are infected but do not show symptoms can also spread the virus to others.

Implementing this guidance may help prevent workplace exposures to SARS-CoV-2 in non-healthcare settings; separate guidance is available for healthcare settings. CDC also has guidance for critical infrastructure work settings. Unless otherwise specified, this interim guidance for businesses and employers applies to critical infrastructure workplaces as well.

Role of Businesses and Employers in Responding to COVID-19

Businesses and employers can play a key role in preventing and slowing the spread of SARS-CoV-2 within the workplace. Employers' COVID-19 preparedness, response, and control plans should take into account workplace factors such as feasibility of social distancing in the workplace, ability to stagger employee shifts, degree to which employees interact with the public in person, feasibility of accomplishing work by telework, geographical isolation of the workplace, whether employees live in congregate housing, proportion of employees at increased risk for severe illness, policies regarding sick leave for staff, and priority for continuity of operations. Employers should also consider the level of COVID-19 disease transmission in their communities.

Businesses and employers are encouraged to coordinate with state and local health officials to obtain timely and accurate information to inform appropriate responses. Local conditions will influence the decisions that public health officials make regarding community-level strategies. CDC has guidance for mitigation strategies according to the level of community transmission or impact of COVID-19.

As an employer, if your business operations were interrupted, resuming normal or phased activities presents an opportunity to update your COVID-19 preparedness, response, and control plans. All employers should implement and update as necessary a plan that:

- Is specific to your workplace,
- Identifies all areas and job tasks with potential exposures to SARS-CoV-2, and
- Includes control measures to eliminate or reduce such exposures.

Talk with your employees about planned changes and seek their input. Additionally, collaborate with employees and unions to effectively communicate important COVID-19 information.

See the OSHA COVID-19 guidance for more information on how to protect workers from potential exposures, according to their exposure risk. Plans should consider that employees may be able to spread COVID-19 even if they do not show symptoms.

All employers need to consider how best to decrease the spread of SARS CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and lower the impact in your workplace. This should include activities to:

- prevent and reduce transmission among employees,
- maintain healthy business operations, and
- maintain a healthy work environment.

Prevent and Reduce Transmission Among Employees

Monitor federal, state, and local public health communications about COVID-19 regulations, guidance, and recommendations and ensure that workers have access to that information. Frequently check the CDC COVID-19 website.

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home

- Employees who have symptoms should notify their supervisor and stay home. CDC recommends testing for people with any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and for all close contacts of persons with COVID-19.
- Employees who are sick with COVID-19 should isolate and follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees who are asymptomatic (have no symptoms) or pre-symptomatic (not yet showing symptoms) but have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 infection should also isolate and follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, in consultation with healthcare providers.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick household member with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow CDC-recommended precautions.
- Employers are encouraged to implement flexible, non-punitive paid sick leave and supportive policies and practices as part of a comprehensive approach to prevent and reduce transmission among employees. Some employees may be eligible to take leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or the Families First Coronavirus Response Act .

Top of Page

Consider conducting daily in-person or virtual health checks (e.g., symptom and temperature screening) of employees before they enter the facility, in accordance with state and local public health authorities and, if available, your occupational health services. Screening and health checks are not a replacement for other protective measures such as social distancing, mask wearing (unless respirators or facemasks are required), and engineering controls, including proper ventilation. Symptom and temperature screening cannot identify people with SARS-CoV-2 infection who are asymptomatic (do not have symptoms) or are presymptomatic (have not developed signs or symptoms yet but will later).

For **virtual health checks**, encourage individuals to self-screen prior to coming onsite. An electronic monitoring system could be implemented in which, prior to arrival at the facility, employees report absence of fever and symptoms of COVID-19, absence of a diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 10 days, confirm they have not been exposed to others with SARS-CoV-2 infection during the prior 14 days, and confirm they are not undergoing evaluation for SARS-CoV-2 infection such as pending viral test (nucleic acid amplification test or antigen test).

For **in-person health checks**, conduct them safely and respectfully and in a way that maintains social distancing of workers in and entering the screening area. Workers should not enter the worksite past the screening area if any of the following are present:

- Symptoms of COVID-19
- Fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) or higher or report feeling feverish
- Undergoing evaluation for SARS-CoV-2 infection (such as pending viral test)
- Diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 10 days
- Close contact to someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection during the prior 14 days

Follow guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission regarding confidentiality of medical records from health checks. To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, make employee health screenings as private as possible. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin and be sure to maintain confidentiality of each individual's medical status and history.

Ensure personnel performing in-person screening activities are appropriately protected against exposure to potentially infectious workers entering the facility. Methods known to reduce risk of transmission include social distancing, physical barriers, and mask wearing. If social distance or barrier controls cannot be implemented during screening, personal protective equipment (PPE) can be used when the screener is within 6 feet of an employee. However, reliance on PPE alone is a less effective control and may be more difficult to implement given PPE shortages and training requirements. Ensure screeners are trained on proper use and reading of thermometers per manufacturer standards; improper calibration and use can lead to incorrect temperature readings.

Below are examples that can be incorporated into the in-person screening process.

- **Social Distancing:** Ask employees to take their own temperature either before coming to the workplace or upon arrival at the workplace. Upon their arrival, stand at least 6 feet away from the employee and:
  - Ask the employee to confirm that their temperature is less than 100.4° F (38.0° C)
  - Make a visual inspection of the employee for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks, sweating inappropriately for ambient temperature, or difficultly with ordinary tasks
  - Screening staff do not need to wear PPE if they can maintain a distance of 6 feet; however, screening staff and employees being screened should wear masks.
- **Barrier/Partitional Controls:** During screening, the screener should stand behind a physical barrier, such as a glass or plastic window or partition, that can protect the screener's face and mucous membranes from respiratory droplets that may be produced when the employee sneezes, coughs, talks, or breathes. Upon arrival, the screener should wear a mask and wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or, if soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. For each employee:
  - Make a visual inspection of the employee for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks, sweating inappropriately for ambient temperature, or difficulty with ordinary tasks.
  - Conduct temperature and symptom screening
    - Put on disposable gloves.
    - Check the employee's temperature, reaching around the partition or through the window. Make sure the screener's face stays behind the barrier at all times during the screening.
    - **Contact thermometers need to be cleaned and disinfected after each screened employee** according to manufacturer's instructions and facility policies. Non-contact thermometers should be cleaned and disinfected according to manufacturer's instructions and facility policies.
  - Remove and discard gloves, and wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds between each employee. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
    - If disposable or non-contact thermometers are used and the screener does not have physical contact with the individual, the screener's gloves do not need to be changed before the next check. Gloves should be removed and discarded if soiled or damaged. Gloves should not be worn continuously for more than for four hours. After removing gloves, screeners should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Gloves should be removed and discarded anytime they are soiled or damage.
- **PPE:** Screeners need to be trained on how to properly put on, take off and dispose of all PPE. Upon arrival, the screener should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol and put on a facemask or respirator, eye protection (goggles or disposable face shield that fully covers the front and sides of the face), and a single pair of disposable gloves. Extended use of a facemask or respirator and eye protection may be implemented. A gown could be considered if extensive contact with an employee is anticipated.

- Make a visual inspection of the employee for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks, sweating inappropriately for ambient temperature, or difficulty performing ordinary tasks.
- Conduct temperature and symptom screening
  - If performing a temperature check on multiple individuals, **the screener should change their gloves and wash their hands or use hand sanitizer** with at least 60% alcohol **between each employee.**
  - **Contact thermometers need to be cleaned and disinfected after each screened employee** according to manufacturer's instructions and facility policies. Non-contact thermometers should be cleaned and disinfected according to manufacturer's instructions and facility policies.
  - If disposable or non-contact thermometers are used and the screener does not have physical contact with the individual, the screener's gloves do not need to be changed before the next check. Gloves should not be worn continuously for more than for four hours. After removing gloves, screeners should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
  - Any PPE, including gloves, facemask, respirator, eye protection, and gown, should be removed and discarded if soiled or damaged.

Top of Page

Consider incorporating testing for SARS-CoV-2 into workplace preparedness, response, and control plans

- Consider implementing an approach to testing based on the guidance for select non-healthcare workplaces.
- Approaches may include initial testing of all workers before entering a workplace, periodic testing of workers at regular intervals, or targeted testing of new workers or those returning from a prolonged absence such as medical leave or furlough, or some combination of approaches. Several factors may be helpful in determining the interval for periodic testing, including availability of testing, results of previous testing, and level of community transmission.

Identify where and how workers might be exposed to individuals with COVID-19 at work

Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace. Conduct a thorough hazard assessment of the workplace to identify potential workplace hazards related to COVID-19. Use appropriate combinations of control measures from the hierarchy of controls to limit the spread of COVID-19, including engineering controls, workplace administrative policies, and PPE to protect workers from the identified hazards (see table below):

- Conduct a thorough hazard assessment to determine if workplace hazards are present, or are likely to be present, and determine what type of controls or PPE are needed for specific job duties.
- When engineering and administrative controls cannot be implemented or are not fully protective, employers are required by OSHA standards to:
  - Determine what PPE is needed for their workers' specific job duties,
  - Select and provide appropriate PPE to the workers at no cost, and
  - Train their workers on its correct use.
- Ensure all employees wear masks in accordance with CDC and OSHA guidance as well as any state or local requirements. This applies if the hazard assessment has determined that they do not require PPE, such as a respirator or medical facemask for protection.
  - CDC recommends wearing a mask, that covers the nose and mouth and fits snugly against the sides of the face, as a measure to contain the wearer's respiratory droplets and help protect their co-workers and members of the

general public. Masks should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
    - Masks are meant to help prevent workers who do not know they have the virus that causes COVID-19 from spreading it to others; however, masks might provide some protection to wearers.
    - Masks do not provide the same level of protection as a medical facemask or respirator and should not replace PPE required or recommended at the workplace.
- Remind employees and customers that CDC recommends wearing masks in public settings and when around people who do not live in their household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Wearing a mask, however, is not a substitute for social distancing. Masks should still be worn in addition to staying at least 6 feet apart.
- See the OSHA COVID-19 webpage for more information on how to protect workers from potential SARS-CoV-2 exposures and guidance for employers , including steps to take for jobs according to exposure risk.

Separate sick employees

- Employees who appear to have symptoms upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors, and sent home.
- Have a procedure in place for the safe transport of an employee who becomes sick while at work. The employee may need to be transported home or to a healthcare provider.

Top of Page

Take action if an employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19

In most cases, you do not need to shut down your facility. If it has been less than 7 days since the sick employee has been in the facility, close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the sick person:

- Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for other employees being exposed to respiratory droplets. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- During this waiting period, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in these areas.

If it has been 7 days or more since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection are not necessary. Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces in the facility.

Follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations:

- Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water before disinfecting them.
- To disinfect surfaces , use products that meet EPA criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2 , the virus that causes COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- Always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used when you are cleaning and disinfecting
- Ensure there is adequate ventilation when using cleaning and disinfection products to prevent from inhaling toxic vapors.
- You may need to wear additional PPE depending on the setting and disinfectant product you are using. For each product you use, consult and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.

Determine which employees may have been exposed to the virus and may need to take additional precautions:

- Employers have an obligation to manage the potentially exposed workers' return to work in ways that best protect the health of those workers, their co-workers, and the general public.
- Inform employees of their possible close contact (within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with someone with confirmed or suspected SARS-CoV-2 infection in the workplace, but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) .
- Most workplaces should follow the Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure. The most protective approach for the workplace is for exposed employees (close contacts) to quarantine for 14 days, telework if possible, and self-monitor for symptoms. This approach maximally reduces post-quarantine transmission risk and is the strategy with the greatest collective experience at present.
- Although CDC continues to recommend a 14-day quarantine, options are provided for shorter quarantine that may end after day 7 or after day 10 based on certain conditions. Alternatives to the 14-day quarantine are described in the Options to Reduce Quarantine for Contacts of Persons with SARS-CoV-2 Infection Using Symptom Monitoring and Diagnostic Testing. Shortening quarantine may increase willingness to adhere to public health recommendations. However, shortened quarantine may be less effective in preventing transmission of COVID-19 than the currently recommended 14-day quarantine.
- Workplaces could consider these quarantine alternatives as measures to mitigate staffing shortages, but they are not the preferred options to mitigate staffing shortages. Workplaces should understand that shortening the duration of quarantine might pose additional transmission risk. Employers should also consider workplace characteristics when considering if this additional transmission risk is acceptable (e.g., level of community transmission, ability to maintain social distancing, proportion of employees at increased risk for severe illness, and priority for continuity of operations). Employers should counsel workers about the need to monitor for symptoms and immediately self-isolate if symptoms occur during the 14 days after their exposure and the importance of consistent adherence to all recommended mitigation strategies (e.g., mask wearing, social distancing, hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, and proper ventilation).
- Implementation of testing strategies can supplement measures to reduce transmission in the workplace. Repeated testing over time, also referred to as serial testing, may be more likely to detect infection among workers with exposures than testing done at a single point in time.
- Critical infrastructure workplaces should follow COVID-19 Critical Infrastructure Sector Response Planning and guidance on Testing Strategy for Coronavirus (COVID-19) in High-Density Critical Infrastructure Workplaces after a COVID-19 Case is Identified.

Top of Page

Educate employees about steps they can take to protect themselves at work and at home

- Encourage employees to follow any new policies or procedures related to illness, cleaning and disinfecting, and work meetings and travel.
- Advise employees to:
  - Stay home if they are sick, except to get medical care, and to learn what to do if they are sick.
  - Inform their supervisor if they have a sick household member at home with COVID-19 and to learn what to do if someone in their home is sick.
  - Wear a mask when out in public and when around people who do not live in their household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Masks should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

- Wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or to use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. Inform employees that if their hands are visibly dirty, they should use soap and water instead of hand sanitizer. Key times for employees to clean their hands include:
  - Before and after work shifts
  - Before and after work breaks
  - After blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing
  - After using the restroom
  - Before eating or preparing food
  - After putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of their elbow. Throw used tissues into no-touch trash cans and immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Learn more about coughing and sneezing etiquette on the CDC website.
- Practice routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs. Dirty surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2 , the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- Avoid using other employees' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. Clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Practice social distancing by avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (at least 6 feet) from others when possible.

For employees who commute to work using public transportation or ride sharing, consider offering the following support

- If feasible, offer employees incentives to use forms of transportation that minimize close contact with others (e.g., biking, walking, driving or riding by car either alone or with household members).
- Ask employees to follow the CDC guidance on how to protect yourself when using transportation.
- Allow employees to shift their hours so they can commute during less busy times.
- Ask employees to clean their hands as soon as possible after their trip.

Top of Page

Maintain Healthy Business Operations

Identify a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 issues and their impact at the workplace.

Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices

- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible, non-punitive, and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and

allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.

- Some workers may be eligible to take leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or the Families First Coronavirus Response Act .
- Employers with fewer than 500 employees are eligible for 100% tax credits for Families First Coronavirus Response Act COVID-19 paid leave provided through March 31, 2021, up to certain limits.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees should consider drafting non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies.
- Employers should not require a COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work.
  - Under the American's with Disabilities Act, employers are permitted to require a doctor's note from their employees to verify that they are healthy and able to return to work. However, as a practical matter, be aware that healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner. Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care and can follow CDC recommendations to determine when to discontinue home isolation and return to work.
  - The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has established guidance regarding Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act . The guidance enables employers to take steps to protect workers consistent with CDC guidance, including requiring workers to stay home when necessary to address the direct threat of spreading SARS-CoV-2 infection to others.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that your policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the Department of Labor's and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's websites).
- Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources, if available, and community resources as needed. Employees may need additional social, behavioral, and other services, for example, to help them manage stress and cope.

Top of Page

Protect employees at higher risk for severe illness through supportive policies and practices

Older adults and people of any age who have certain underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

- Support and encourage options to telework, if available. This will eliminate the need for employees living in higher transmission areas to travel to workplaces in lower transmission areas and vice versa.
- Consider offering employees at higher risk for severe illness duties that minimize their contact with customers and other employees (e.g., restocking shelves rather than working as a cashier), if the worker agrees to this.
- Ensure that any other businesses and employers sharing the same workspace also follow this guidance.

Communicate supportive workplace polices clearly, frequently, and via multiple methods

Employers may need to communicate with non-English speakers in their preferred languages.

- Train workers on how implementing any new policies to reduce the spread of SARS CoV-2 may affect existing health and safety practices.

- Communicate to any contractors or on-site visitors about changes that have been made to help control the spread of SARS CoV-2. Ensure that they have the information and capability to comply with those policies.
- Create and test communication systems that employees can use to self-report if they are sick and that you can use to notify employees of exposures and closures.
- Consider using a hotline or another method for employees to voice concerns anonymously.

Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products.

- Be prepared to change your business practices, if needed, to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize existing customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations).
- Identify alternate supply chains for critical goods and services. Some goods and services may be in higher demand or unavailable.
- If other companies provide your business with contract or temporary employees, talk with them about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- Talk with business partners about your response efforts. Share best practices with other businesses in your communities (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.
- Identify and prioritize job functions for continuous operations. Minimize the number of workers present at worksites by balancing the need to protect workers with support for continuing operations.

Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children until childcare programs and K-12 schools can resume their normal schedules.

- Plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace.
- Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher-than-usual absenteeism.
- Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies.
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.

Top of Page

Establish policies and practices for social distancing. Alter your workspace to help workers and customers maintain social distancing and physically separate employees from each other and from customers, when possible. Here are some strategies that businesses can use:

- Implement flexible worksites (e.g., telework).
- Implement flexible work hours (e.g., rotate or stagger shifts to limit the number of employees in the workplace at the same time).
- Increase physical space between employees at the worksite by modifying the workspace.
- Increase physical space between employees and customers (e.g., drive-through service, physical barriers such as partitions).
- Use signs, tape marks, or other visual cues such as decals or colored tape on the floor, placed at least 6 feet apart, to indicate where to stand when physical barriers are not possible.
- Implement flexible meeting and travel options (e.g., postpone in-person non-essential meetings or events in accordance with state and local regulations and guidance).

- Close or limit access to common areas where employees are likely to congregate and interact.
- Prohibit handshaking.
- Deliver services remotely (e.g., phone, video, or web).
- Adjust your business practices to reduce close contact with customers — for example, by providing drive-through service, click-and-collect online shopping, shop-by-phone, curbside pickup, and delivery options, where feasible.
- Move the electronic payment terminal/credit card reader farther away from the cashier, if possible, to increase the distance between the customer and the cashier.
- Shift primary stocking activities to off-peak or after hours, when possible, to reduce contact with customers.

If you have more than one business location, consider giving local managers the authority to take appropriate actions outlined in their COVID-19 response plans based on their local conditions.

Top of Page

Maintain a healthy work environment

Since COVID-19 may be spread by those with no symptoms, businesses and employers should evaluate and institute controls according to the hierarchy of controls to protect their employees and members of the general public.

Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system. This may include some or all of the following considerations:

- Increase outdoor air ventilation, using caution in highly polluted areas.
- When weather conditions allow, increase fresh outdoor air by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to occupants in the building.
- Use fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows. To safely achieve this, fan placement is important and will vary based on room configuration. Avoid placing fans in a way that could potentially cause contaminated air to flow directly from one person over another. One helpful strategy is to use a window fan, placed safely and securely in a window, to exhaust room air to the outdoors. This will help draw fresh air into room via other open windows and doors without generating strong room air currents.
- Decrease occupancy in areas where outdoor ventilation cannot be increased.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.
- Increase airflow to occupied spaces when possible.
- Turn off any demand-controlled ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on occupancy or temperature during occupied hours. In homes and buildings where the HVAC fan operation can be controlled at the thermostat, set the fan to the "on" position instead of "auto," which will operate the fan continuously, even when heating or air-conditioning is not required.
- Open outdoor air dampers beyond minimum settings to reduce or eliminate HVAC air recirculation. In mild weather, this will not affect thermal comfort or humidity. However, this may be difficult to do in cold, hot, or humid weather.
- Improve central air filtration:

    Increase air filtration to as high as possible without significantly reducing design airflow.

  - Inspect filter housing and racks to ensure appropriate filter fit and check for ways to minimize filter bypass.
  - Check filters to ensure they are within their service life and appropriately installed.
- Ensure restroom exhaust fans are functional and operating at full capacity when the building is occupied.
- Inspect and maintain local exhaust ventilation in areas such as kitchens, cooking areas, etc. Operate these systems any time these spaces are occupied. Consider operating these systems, even when the specific space is not occupied, to increase overall ventilation within the occupied building.
- Consider portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to help enhance air cleaning (especially in higher risk areas such as a nurse's office or areas frequently inhabited by persons with increased risk of getting COVID-19).
- Generate clean-to-less-clean air movement by re-evaluating the positioning of supply and exhaust air diffusers and/or dampers (especially in higher risk areas).
- Consider using ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) as a supplement to help inactivate SARS-CoV-2, especially if options for increasing room ventilation are limited. Upper-room UVGI systems can be used to provide air cleaning within occupied spaces, and in-duct UVGI systems can help enhance air cleaning inside central ventilation systems.

Note: The ASHRAE Guidance for Building Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic provides further information on ventilation and building operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Top of Page

Ensure the safety of your building water system and devices after a prolonged shutdown

- Follow the CDC Guidance for Building Water Systems, which describes 8 steps to take before you reopen your business or building.

Give employees, customers, and visitors what they need to clean their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes

- Provide tissues and no-touch trash cans.
- Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained.
- Ideally, place touchless hand sanitizer stations in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.
- Place posters that encourage hand hygiene to help stop the spread at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen. This should include signs for non-English speakers, as needed.
- Discourage handshaking. Encourage employees to use other noncontact methods of greeting.
- Direct employees to visit CDC's coughing and sneezing etiquette and clean hands webpage for more information.

Perform routine cleaning and disinfection

- Follow the Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting to develop, implement, and maintain a plan to perform regular cleanings to reduce the risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.
  - If surfaces are dirty, clean them using a detergent or soap and water before you disinfect them.
  - For disinfection, most common, EPA-registered, household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available on the EPA website. Follow

the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method, and contact time).

- Discourage workers from using each other's phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible.
- Provide disposable disinfecting wipes so that employees can wipe down commonly used surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) before each use.
- Store and use disinfectants in a responsible and appropriate manner according to the label.
- Do not mix bleach or other cleaning and disinfection products together. This can cause fumes that may be very dangerous to breathe in.
- Ensure there is adequate ventilation when using cleaning and disinfection products.
- Advise employees to always wear gloves appropriate for the chemicals being used when they are cleaning and disinfecting and that they may need additional PPE based on the setting and product.

Perform cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility

- If a sick employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations.

Top of Page

Limit travel and advise employees, if they must travel, to take additional precautions and preparations

- Minimize non-essential travel and if resuming non-essential travel, follow state and local regulations and guidance.
- Check Travel Planner for state, local, tribal, and territorial government restrictions before traveling.
- Check the CDC's Traveler's Health Notices for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country where you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from countries with travel advisories, and information for aircrew, can be found on the CDC website.
- For international travel, see the Small Business International Travel Resource , an employer and employee planning tool for safe and healthy employee travel.
- Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of COVID-19 before starting travel and to notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
- If they are outside the United States, sick employees should follow company policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to help them find an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, or resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

Minimize risk to employees when planning meetings and gatherings

- Use videoconferencing or teleconferencing when possible for work-related meetings and gatherings.
- Cancel, adjust, or postpone large work-related meetings or gatherings that can only occur in-person in accordance with state and local regulations and guidance.

- When videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces continuing to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet apart and wear masks.

Maintain a tobacco-free workplace that protects those in workplaces from involuntary, secondhand exposure to tobacco smoke.

- Being a current or former cigarette smoker increases a person's risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Smokefree polices improve health. Review Promoting Health and Preventing Disease and Injury Through Workplace Tobacco Polices.

Top of Page

Employers: Use the table below to implement the most appropriate controls for your workplace

The table below presents examples of controls to implement in your workplace. The most effective controls are those that rely on engineering solutions, followed by administrative controls, then PPE. PPE is the least effective control method and the most difficult to implement. Worksites may have to implement multiple complementary controls from these columns to effectively control the hazard.

Example controls to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 in the work environment

Engineering

Facilities and Equipment

- Assess job hazards for feasibility of engineering controls
- Ensure ventilation and water systems operate properly
- Alter workspaces to maintain social distancing. Examples include:
  - Configure partitions as a barrier shield
  - Move electronic payment reader away from cashier
  - Use verbal announcements, signage, and visual cues to promote social distancing
  - Remove/rearrange furniture
  - Provide remote shopping alternatives (e.g., delivery, pick-up)

Administrative

Screening

- Temperature and symptom screening
- Testing for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19

Management and Communications

- Monitor state and local public health communications about COVID-19
- Encourage sick workers to report symptoms, stay home, and follow CDC guidance

- Develop strategies to:
  - manage worker concerns
  - communicate with workers
- Remind workers of available support services
- Communicate to partners, suppliers, other contractors on policies and practices
- Encourage social distancing and the use of masks (if appropriate) in the workplace
- Use technology to promote social distancing (e.g., telework and virtual meetings)
- Cancel group events
- Close/limit use of shared spaces
- Ask customers who are ill to stay home
- Consider policies that encourage flexible sick leave and alternative work schedules.
- Schedule stocking during off-peak hours
- Maintain a tobacco-free workplace

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, (e.g., counters, shelving, displays)
- Provide employees with disposable disinfectant wipes, cleaner, or sprays that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19

Training

Provide employees with training on:

- Policies to reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2
- General hygiene
- Symptoms, what to do if sick
- Cleaning and disinfection
- Masks
- Social distancing
- Use of PPE
- Safe work practices
- Stress management

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE

- Conduct workplace hazard assessment
- Determine what PPE is needed for workers' specific job duties based on hazards and other controls present
- Select and provide appropriate PPE to the workers at no cost

Top of Page

Resources for more information:

CDC Guidance

COVID-19 Website

Business and Workplaces webpage

General Business Frequently Asked Questions

Small Business

Transportation and Delivery

What You Need to Know About COVID-19

What to Do If You Are Sick With COVID-19

What Workers and Employers Can Do to Manage Workplace Fatigue during COVID-19

People at Higher Risk of Severe Illness

Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposures

Public Health Recommendations after Travel-Associated COVID-19 Exposure

Health Alert Network

Travelers' Health Website

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's Small Business International Travel Resource Travel Planner

Managing Workplace Fatigue

Other Federal Agencies and Partners

OSHA COVID-19 Website

OSHA Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

Top of Page

Previous Updates

Updates from Previous Content

As of May 6, 2020

- Updated strategies and recommendations for employers responding to COVID-19, including those seeking to resume normal or phased business operations:
  - Conducting daily health checks
  - Conducting a hazard assessment of the workplace
  - Encouraging employees to wear cloth face coverings in the workplace, if appropriate
  - Implementing policies and practices for social distancing in the workplace
  - Improving the building ventilation system
- A table outlining the engineering controls, administrative controls, and personal protective equipment (PPE) that employers may use to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace

As of March 21, 2020

- Updated cleaning and disinfection guidance
- Updated best practices for conducting social distancing
- Updated strategies and recommendations that can be implemented now to respond to COVID-19

Top of Page

Last Updated Jan. 4, 2021

Community, Work & School

Health Equity

Community Mitigation Framework

Cleaning, Disinfecting, & Ventilation

Workplaces & Businesses

Schools & Child Care

- Colleges & Universities +
- Parks, Sports & Recreation +
- Community Organizations & Gatherings +
- Shared & Congregate Housing +
- Retirement Communities +
- Homeless Populations +
- Correctional & Detention Facilities +
- Tribal Communities +
- Guidance Documents
- Communication Resources +
- What's New

Get Email Updates

To receive email updates about COVID-19, enter your email address:

Email Address

What's this?

Submit

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE

Español

繁體中文

Tiếng Việt

한국어

Français

Polski

Tagalog

Русский

العربية

Kreyòl Ayisyen

Deutsch

日本語

Português

Italiano

فارسی

English

CONTACT CDC

ABOUT CDC

POLICIES

LANGUAGES

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

USA.gov

The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20210810121431/https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/comm...

ARCHIVED WEBPAGE: This webpage is for historical purposes and is **no longer being updated.** For the latest information, view the COVID-19 homepage.

Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Plan, Prepare and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019

Updated Mar. 8, 2021

For the latest information, view the updated business guidance from OSHA: Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace

Summary of Recent Changes

Updates as of Dec 31, 2020

As of December 31, 2020

- Expanded section on in-person or virtual health checks
- Added a section on considerations for testing for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19
- Addressed shortened quarantine options. Shortening quarantine may increase willingness to adhere to public health recommendations; however, shortened quarantine may be less effective in preventing transmission of COVID-19 than the currently recommended 14-day quarantine.
- Clarified that all workers should wear masks (unless respirators or facemasks are required) in accordance with CDC and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidance and any state or local requirements
- Clarified that, in addition to preventing the wearer's respiratory droplets from reaching others, masks might be protective to the wearer

View Previous Updates

Purpose

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person, especially between people who are physically near each other (within about 6 feet). People who are infected but do not show symptoms can also spread the virus to others.

Implementing this guidance may help prevent workplace exposures to SARS-CoV-2 in non-healthcare settings; separate guidance is available for healthcare settings. CDC also has guidance for critical infrastructure work settings. Unless otherwise specified, this interim guidance for businesses and employers applies to critical infrastructure workplaces as well.

Role of Businesses and Employers in Responding to COVID-19

Businesses and employers can play a key role in preventing and slowing the spread of SARS-CoV-2 within the workplace. Employers' COVID-19 preparedness, response, and control plans should take into account workplace factors such as feasibility of social distancing in the workplace, ability to stagger employee shifts, degree to which employees interact with the public in person, feasibility of accomplishing work by telework, geographical isolation of the workplace, whether employees live in congregate housing, proportion of employees at increased risk for severe illness, policies regarding sick leave for staff, and priority for continuity of operations. Employers should also consider the level of COVID-19 disease transmission in their communities.

Businesses and employers are encouraged to coordinate with state and local health officials to obtain timely and accurate information to inform appropriate responses. Local conditions will influence the decisions that public health officials make regarding community-level strategies.

As an employer, if your business operations were interrupted, resuming normal or phased activities presents an opportunity to update your COVID-19 preparedness, response, and control plans. All employers should implement and update as necessary a plan that:

- Is specific to your workplace,
- Identifies all areas and job tasks with potential exposures to SARS-CoV-2, and
- Includes control measures to eliminate or reduce such exposures.

Talk with your employees about planned changes and seek their input. Additionally, collaborate with employees and unions to effectively communicate important COVID-19 information.

See the OSHA Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace for more information on how to protect workers from potential exposures, according to their exposure risk. Plans should consider that employees may be able to spread COVID-19 even if they do not show symptoms.

All employers need to consider how best to decrease the spread of SARS CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and lower the impact in your workplace. This should include activities to:

- prevent and reduce transmission among employees,
- maintain healthy business operations, and
- maintain a healthy work environment.

Prevent and Reduce Transmission Among Employees

Monitor federal, state, and local public health communications about COVID-19 regulations, guidance, and recommendations and ensure that workers have access to that information. Frequently check the CDC COVID-19 website.

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home

- Employees who have symptoms should notify their supervisor and stay home. CDC recommends testing for people with any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and for all close contacts of persons with COVID-19.
- Employees who are sick with COVID-19 should isolate and follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees who are asymptomatic (have no symptoms) or pre-symptomatic (not yet showing symptoms) but have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 infection should also isolate and follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, in consultation with healthcare providers.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick household member with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow CDC-recommended precautions.
- Employers are encouraged to implement flexible, non-punitive paid sick leave and supportive policies and practices as part of a comprehensive approach to prevent and reduce transmission among employees. Some employees may be eligible to take leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or the Families First Coronavirus Response Act .

Consider conducting daily in-person or virtual health checks (e.g., symptom and temperature screening) of employees before they enter the facility, in accordance with state and local public health authorities and, if available, your occupational health services. Screening and health checks are not a replacement for other protective measures such as social distancing, mask wearing (unless respirators or facemasks are required), and engineering controls, including proper ventilation. Symptom and temperature screening cannot identify people with SARS-CoV-2 infection who are asymptomatic (do not have symptoms) or are presymptomatic (have not developed signs or symptoms yet but will later).

For **virtual health checks**, encourage individuals to self-screen prior to coming onsite. An electronic monitoring system could be implemented in which, prior to arrival at the facility, employees report absence of fever and symptoms of COVID-19, absence of a diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 10 days, confirm they have not been exposed to others with SARS-CoV-2 infection during the prior 14 days, and confirm they are not undergoing evaluation for SARS-CoV-2 infection such as pending viral test (nucleic acid amplification test or antigen test).

For **in-person health checks**, conduct them safely and respectfully and in a way that maintains social distancing of workers in and entering the screening area. Workers should not enter the worksite past the screening area if any of the following are present:

- Symptoms of COVID-19
- Fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) or higher or report feeling feverish
- Undergoing evaluation for SARS-CoV-2 infection (such as pending viral test)
- Diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2 infection in the prior 10 days
- Close contact to someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection during the prior 14 days

Follow guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission regarding confidentiality of medical records from health checks. To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, make employee health screenings as private as possible. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin and be sure to maintain confidentiality of each individual's medical status and history.

Ensure personnel performing in-person screening activities are appropriately protected against exposure to potentially infectious workers entering the facility. Methods known to reduce risk of transmission include social distancing, physical barriers, and mask wearing. If social distance or barrier controls cannot be implemented during screening, personal protective equipment (PPE) can be used when the screener is within 6 feet of an employee. However, reliance on PPE alone is a less effective control and may be more difficult to implement given PPE shortages and training requirements. Ensure screeners are trained on proper use and reading of thermometers per manufacturer standards; improper calibration and use can lead to incorrect temperature readings.

Below are examples that can be incorporated into the in-person screening process.

- **Social Distancing:** Ask employees to take their own temperature either before coming to the workplace or upon arrival at the workplace. Upon their arrival, stand at least 6 feet away from the employee and:
  - Ask the employee to confirm that their temperature is less than 100.4° F (38.0° C)
  - Make a visual inspection of the employee for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks, sweating inappropriately for ambient temperature, or difficultly with ordinary tasks
  - Screening staff do not need to wear PPE if they can maintain a distance of 6 feet; however, screening staff and employees being screened should wear masks.

- **Barrier/Partitional Controls:** During screening, the screener should stand behind a physical barrier, such as a glass or plastic window or partition, that can protect the screener's face and mucous membranes from respiratory droplets that may be produced when the employee sneezes, coughs, talks, or breathes. Upon arrival, the screener should wear a mask and wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or, if soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. For each employee:
  - Make a visual inspection of the employee for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks, sweating inappropriately for ambient temperature, or difficulty with ordinary tasks.
  - Conduct temperature and symptom screening
    - Put on disposable gloves.

        - Check the employee's temperature, reaching around the partition or through the window. Make sure the screener's face stays behind the barrier at all times during the screening.
        - **Contact thermometers need to be cleaned and disinfected after each screened employee** according to manufacturer's instructions and facility policies. Non-contact thermometers should be cleaned and disinfected according to manufacturer's instructions and facility policies.
    - Remove and discard gloves, and wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds between each employee. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
        - If disposable or non-contact thermometers are used and the screener does not have physical contact with the individual, the screener's gloves do not need to be changed before the next check. Gloves should be removed and discarded if soiled or damaged. Gloves should not be worn continuously for more than for four hours. After removing gloves, screeners should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Gloves should be removed and discarded anytime they are soiled or damage.
- **PPE:** Screeners need to be trained on how to properly put on, take off and dispose of all PPE. Upon arrival, the screener should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol and put on a facemask or respirator, eye protection (goggles or disposable face shield that fully covers the front and sides of the face), and a single pair of disposable gloves. Extended use of a facemask or respirator and eye protection may be implemented. A gown could be considered if extensive contact with an employee is anticipated.
    - Make a visual inspection of the employee for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks, sweating inappropriately for ambient temperature, or difficulty performing ordinary tasks.
    - Conduct temperature and symptom screening
        - If performing a temperature check on multiple individuals, **the screener should change their gloves and wash their hands or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol between each employee.**
        - **Contact thermometers need to be cleaned and disinfected after each screened employee** according to manufacturer's instructions and facility policies. Non-contact thermometers should be cleaned and disinfected according to manufacturer's instructions and facility policies.
        - If disposable or non-contact thermometers are used and the screener does not have physical contact with the individual, the screener's gloves do not need to be changed before the next check. Gloves should not be worn continuously for more than for four hours. After removing gloves, screeners should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
        - Any PPE, including gloves, facemask, respirator, eye protection, and gown, should be removed and discarded if soiled or damaged.

Consider incorporating testing for SARS-CoV-2 into workplace preparedness, response, and control plans

- Consider implementing an approach to testing based on the guidance for select non-healthcare workplaces.

- Approaches may include initial testing of all workers before entering a workplace, periodic testing of workers at regular intervals, or targeted testing of new workers or those returning from a prolonged absence such as medical leave or furlough, or some combination of approaches. Several factors may be helpful in determining the interval for periodic testing, including availability of testing, results of previous testing, and level of community transmission.

Identify where and how workers might be exposed to individuals with COVID-19 at work

Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace. Conduct a thorough hazard assessment of the workplace to identify potential workplace hazards related to COVID-19. Use appropriate combinations of control measures from the hierarchy of controls to limit the spread of COVID-19, including engineering controls, workplace administrative policies, and PPE to protect workers from the identified hazards (see table below):

- Conduct a thorough hazard assessment to determine if workplace hazards are present, or are likely to be present, and determine what type of controls or PPE are needed for specific job duties.
- When engineering and administrative controls cannot be implemented or are not fully protective, employers are required by OSHA standards to:
  - Determine what PPE is needed for their workers' specific job duties,
  - Select and provide appropriate PPE to the workers at no cost, and
  - Train their workers on its correct use.
- Ensure all employees wear masks in accordance with CDC and OSHA guidance as well as any state or local requirements. This applies if the hazard assessment has determined that they do not require PPE, such as a respirator or medical facemask for protection.
  - CDC recommends wearing a mask, that covers the nose and mouth and fits snugly against the sides of the face, as a measure to contain the wearer's respiratory droplets and help protect their co-workers and members of the general public. Masks should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
  - Masks are meant to help prevent workers who do not know they have the virus that causes COVID-19 from spreading it to others; however, masks might provide some protection to wearers.
  - Masks do not provide the same level of protection as a medical facemask or respirator and should not replace PPE required or recommended at the workplace.
- Remind employees and customers that CDC recommends wearing masks in public settings and when around people who do not live in their household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Wearing a mask, however, is not a substitute for social distancing. Masks should still be worn in addition to staying at least 6 feet apart.
- See the OSHA COVID-19 webpage for more information on how to protect workers from potential SARS-CoV-2 exposures and guidance for employers, including steps to take for jobs according to exposure risk.

Separate sick employees

- Employees who appear to have symptoms upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors, and sent home.
- Have a procedure in place for the safe transport of an employee who becomes sick while at work. The employee may need to be transported home or to a healthcare provider.

Take action if an employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19

Follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations:

- Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water before disinfecting them.
- To disinfect surfaces , use products that meet EPA criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2 , the virus that causes COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- Always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used when you are cleaning and disinfecting
- Ensure there is adequate ventilation when using cleaning and disinfection products to prevent from inhaling toxic vapors.
- You may need to wear additional PPE depending on the setting and disinfectant product you are using. For each product you use, consult and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.

Determine which employees may have been exposed to the virus and may need to take additional precautions:

- Employers have an obligation to manage the potentially exposed workers' return to work in ways that best protect the health of those workers, their co-workers, and the general public.
- Inform employees of their possible close contact (within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with someone with confirmed or suspected SARS-CoV-2 infection in the workplace, but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) .
- Most workplaces should follow the Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure. The most protective approach for the workplace is for exposed employees (close contacts) to quarantine for 14 days, telework if possible, and self-monitor for symptoms. This approach maximally reduces post-quarantine transmission risk and is the strategy with the greatest collective experience at present.
- Although CDC continues to recommend a 14-day quarantine, options are provided for shorter quarantine that may end after day 7 or after day 10 based on certain conditions. Alternatives to the 14-day quarantine are described in the Options to Reduce Quarantine for Contacts of Persons with SARS-CoV-2 Infection Using Symptom Monitoring and Diagnostic Testing. Shortening quarantine may increase willingness to adhere to public health recommendations. However, shortened quarantine may be less effective in preventing transmission of COVID-19 than the currently recommended 14-day quarantine.
- Workplaces could consider these quarantine alternatives as measures to mitigate staffing shortages, but they are not the preferred options to mitigate staffing shortages. Workplaces should understand that shortening the duration of quarantine might pose additional transmission risk. Employers should also consider workplace characteristics when considering if this additional transmission risk is acceptable (e.g., level of community transmission, ability to maintain social distancing, proportion of employees at increased risk for severe illness, and priority for continuity of operations). Employers should counsel workers about the need to monitor for symptoms and immediately self-isolate if symptoms occur during the 14 days after their exposure and the importance of consistent adherence to all recommended mitigation strategies (e.g., mask wearing, social distancing, hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, and proper ventilation).
- Implementation of testing strategies can supplement measures to reduce transmission in the workplace. Repeated testing over time, also referred to as serial testing, may be more likely to detect infection among workers with exposures than testing done at a single point in time.
- Critical infrastructure workplaces should follow COVID-19 Critical Infrastructure Sector Response Planning and guidance on Testing Strategy for Coronavirus (COVID-19) in High-Density Critical Infrastructure Workplaces after a COVID-19 Case is Identified.

Educate employees about steps they can take to protect themselves at work and at home

- Encourage employees to follow any new policies or procedures related to illness, cleaning and disinfecting, and work meetings and travel.
- Advise employees to:
  - Stay home if they are sick, except to get medical care, and to learn what to do if they are sick.
  - Inform their supervisor if they have a sick household member at home with COVID-19 and to learn what to do if someone in their home is sick.
  - Wear a mask when out in public and when around people who do not live in their household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Masks should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
  - Wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or to use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. Inform employees that if their hands are visibly dirty, they should use soap and water instead of hand sanitizer. Key times for employees to clean their hands include:
    - Before and after work shifts
    - Before and after work breaks
    - After blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing
    - After using the restroom
    - Before eating or preparing food
    - After putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings
  - Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
  - Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of their elbow. Throw used tissues into no-touch trash cans and immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Learn more about coughing and sneezing etiquette on the CDC website.
  - Practice routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched objects and surfaces such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs. Dirty surfaces can be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. To disinfect, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2 , the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
  - Avoid using other employees' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. Clean and disinfect them before and after use.
  - Practice social distancing by avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (at least 6 feet) from others when possible.

For employees who commute to work using public transportation or ride sharing, consider offering the following support

- If feasible, offer employees incentives to use forms of transportation that minimize close contact with others (e.g., biking, walking, driving or riding by car either alone or with household members).
- Ask employees to follow the CDC guidance on how to protect yourself when using transportation.
- Allow employees to shift their hours so they can commute during less busy times.
- Ask employees to clean their hands as soon as possible after their trip.

Maintain Healthy Business Operations

Identify a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 issues and their impact at the workplace.

Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices

- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible, non-punitive, and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.
- Some workers may be eligible to take leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or the Families First Coronavirus Response Act .
- Employers with fewer than 500 employees are eligible for 100% tax credits for Families First Coronavirus Response Act COVID-19 paid leave provided through March 31, 2021, up to certain limits.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees should consider drafting non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies.
- Employers should not require a COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work.
  - Under the American's with Disabilities Act, employers are permitted to require a doctor's note from their employees to verify that they are healthy and able to return to work. However, as a practical matter, be aware that healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner. Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care and can follow CDC recommendations to determine when to discontinue home isolation and return to work.
  - The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has established guidance regarding Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act . The guidance enables employers to take steps to protect workers consistent with CDC guidance, including requiring workers to stay home when necessary to address the direct threat of spreading SARS-CoV-2 infection to others.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that your policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the Department of Labor's and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's websites).
- Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources, if available, and community resources as needed. Employees may need additional social, behavioral, and other services, for example, to help them manage stress and cope.

Protect employees at higher risk for severe illness through supportive policies and practices

Older adults and people of any age who have certain underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

- Support and encourage options to telework, if available. This will eliminate the need for employees living in higher transmission areas to travel to workplaces in lower transmission areas and vice versa.
- Consider offering employees at higher risk for severe illness duties that minimize their contact with customers and other employees (e.g., restocking shelves rather than working as a cashier), if the worker agrees to this.
- Ensure that any other businesses and employers sharing the same workspace also follow this guidance.

Communicate supportive workplace polices clearly, frequently, and via multiple methods

Employers may need to communicate with non-English speakers in their preferred languages.

- Train workers on how implementing any new policies to reduce the spread of SARS CoV-2 may affect existing health and safety practices.
- Communicate to any contractors or on-site visitors about changes that have been made to help control the spread of SARS CoV-2. Ensure that they have the information and capability to comply with those policies.
- Create and test communication systems that employees can use to self-report if they are sick and that you can use to notify employees of exposures and closures.
- Consider using a hotline or another method for employees to voice concerns anonymously.

Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services or products.

- Be prepared to change your business practices, if needed, to maintain critical operations (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize existing customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations).
- Identify alternate supply chains for critical goods and services. Some goods and services may be in higher demand or unavailable.
- If other companies provide your business with contract or temporary employees, talk with them about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- Talk with business partners about your response efforts. Share best practices with other businesses in your communities (especially those in your supply chain), chambers of commerce, and associations to improve community response efforts.
- Identify and prioritize job functions for continuous operations. Minimize the number of workers present at worksites by balancing the need to protect workers with support for continuing operations.

Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children until childcare programs and K-12 schools can resume their normal schedules.

- Plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace.
- Implement plans to continue your essential business functions in case you experience higher-than-usual absenteeism.
- Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies.
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.

Establish policies and practices for social distancing. Alter your workspace to help workers and customers maintain social distancing and physically separate employees from each other and from customers, when possible. Here are some strategies that businesses can use:

- Implement flexible worksites (e.g., telework).
- Implement flexible work hours (e.g., rotate or stagger shifts to limit the number of employees in the workplace at the same time).
- Increase physical space between employees at the worksite by modifying the workspace.
- Increase physical space between employees and customers (e.g., drive-through service, physical barriers such as partitions).
- Use signs, tape marks, or other visual cues such as decals or colored tape on the floor, placed at least 6 feet apart, to indicate where to stand when physical barriers are not possible.
- Implement flexible meeting and travel options (e.g., postpone in-person non-essential meetings or events in accordance with state and local regulations and guidance).
- Close or limit access to common areas where employees are likely to congregate and interact.
- Prohibit handshaking.
- Deliver services remotely (e.g., phone, video, or web).
- Adjust your business practices to reduce close contact with customers — for example, by providing drive-through service, click-and-collect online shopping, shop-by-phone, curbside pickup, and delivery options, where feasible.
- Move the electronic payment terminal/credit card reader farther away from the cashier, if possible, to increase the distance between the customer and the cashier.
- Shift primary stocking activities to off-peak or after hours, when possible, to reduce contact with customers.

If you have more than one business location, consider giving local managers the authority to take appropriate actions outlined in their COVID-19 response plans based on their local conditions.

Maintain a healthy work environment

Since COVID-19 may be spread by those with no symptoms, businesses and employers should evaluate and institute controls according to the hierarchy of controls to protect their employees and members of the general public.

Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system. This may include some or all of the following considerations:

- Increase outdoor air ventilation, using caution in highly polluted areas.

- When weather conditions allow, increase fresh outdoor air by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to occupants in the building.

- Use fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows. To safely achieve this, fan placement is important and will vary based on room configuration. Avoid placing fans in a way that could potentially cause contaminated air to flow directly from one person over another. One helpful strategy is to use a window fan, placed safely and securely in a window, to exhaust room air to the outdoors. This will help draw fresh air into room via other open windows and doors without generating strong room air currents.
- Decrease occupancy in areas where outdoor ventilation cannot be increased.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.
- Increase airflow to occupied spaces when possible.
- Turn off any demand-controlled ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on occupancy or temperature during occupied hours. In homes and buildings where the HVAC fan operation can be controlled at the thermostat, set the fan to the "on" position instead of "auto," which will operate the fan continuously, even when heating or air-conditioning is not required.
- Open outdoor air dampers beyond minimum settings to reduce or eliminate HVAC air recirculation. In mild weather, this will not affect thermal comfort or humidity. However, this may be difficult to do in cold, hot, or humid weather.
- Improve central air filtration:
  - Increase air filtration to as high as possible without significantly reducing design airflow.
  - Inspect filter housing and racks to ensure appropriate filter fit and check for ways to minimize filter bypass.
  - Check filters to ensure they are within their service life and appropriately installed.
- Ensure restroom exhaust fans are functional and operating at full capacity when the building is occupied.
- Inspect and maintain local exhaust ventilation in areas such as kitchens, cooking areas, etc. Operate these systems any time these spaces are occupied. Consider operating these systems, even when the specific space is not occupied, to increase overall ventilation within the occupied building.
- Consider portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to help enhance air cleaning (especially in higher risk areas such as a nurse's office or areas frequently inhabited by persons with increased risk of getting COVID-19).
- Generate clean-to-less-clean air movement by re-evaluating the positioning of supply and exhaust air diffusers and/or dampers (especially in higher risk areas).
- Consider using ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) as a supplement to help inactivate SARS-CoV-2, especially if options for increasing room ventilation are limited. Upper-room UVGI systems can be used to provide air cleaning within occupied spaces, and in-duct UVGI systems can help enhance air cleaning inside central ventilation systems.

Note: The ASHRAE Guidance for Building Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic provides further information on ventilation and building operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ensure the safety of your building water system and devices after a prolonged shutdown

- Follow the CDC Guidance for Building Water Systems, which describes 8 steps to take before you reopen your business or building.

Give employees, customers, and visitors what they need to clean their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes

- Provide tissues and no-touch trash cans.
- Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained.
- Ideally, place touchless hand sanitizer stations in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.
- Place posters that encourage hand hygiene to help stop the spread at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen. This should include signs for non-English speakers, as needed.
- Discourage handshaking. Encourage employees to use other noncontact methods of greeting.
- Direct employees to visit CDC's coughing and sneezing etiquette and clean hands webpage for more information.

Perform routine cleaning and disinfection

- Follow the Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting to develop, implement, and maintain a plan to perform regular cleanings to reduce the risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.
  - If surfaces are dirty, clean them using a detergent or soap and water before you disinfect them.
  - For disinfection, most common, EPA-registered, household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available on the EPA website. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method, and contact time).
- Discourage workers from using each other's phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible.
- Provide disposable disinfecting wipes so that employees can wipe down commonly used surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) before each use.
- Store and use disinfectants in a responsible and appropriate manner according to the label.
- Do not mix bleach or other cleaning and disinfection products together. This can cause fumes that may be very dangerous to breathe in.
- Ensure there is adequate ventilation when using cleaning and disinfection products.
- Advise employees to always wear gloves appropriate for the chemicals being used when they are cleaning and disinfecting and that they may need additional PPE based on the setting and product.

Perform cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility

- If a sick employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations.

Delay travel

- Advise employees, if they must travel, to follow CDC's latest recommendations for travel during COVID-19.
- Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.

- If they are outside the United States, sick employees should follow company policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to help them find an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, or resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

Minimize risk to employees when planning meetings and gatherings

- Use videoconferencing or teleconferencing when possible for work-related meetings and gatherings.
- Cancel, adjust, or postpone large work-related meetings or gatherings that can only occur in-person in accordance with state and local regulations and guidance.
- When videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces continuing to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet apart and wear masks.

Maintain a tobacco-free workplace that protects those in workplaces from involuntary, secondhand exposure to tobacco smoke.

- Being a current or former cigarette smoker increases a person's risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Smokefree polices improve health. Review Promoting Health and Preventing Disease and Injury Through Workplace Tobacco Polices.

Employers: Use the table below to implement the most appropriate controls for your workplace

The table below presents examples of controls to implement in your workplace. The most effective controls are those that rely on engineering solutions, followed by administrative controls, then PPE. PPE is the least effective control method and the most difficult to implement. Worksites may have to implement multiple complementary controls from these columns to effectively control the hazard.

Example controls to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 in the work environment

Engineering

Facilities and Equipment

- Assess job hazards for feasibility of engineering controls
- Ensure ventilation and water systems operate properly
- Alter workspaces to maintain social distancing. Examples include:
  - Configure partitions as a barrier shield
  - Move electronic payment reader away from cashier
  - Use verbal announcements, signage, and visual cues to promote social distancing
  - Remove/rearrange furniture

- Provide remote shopping alternatives (e.g., delivery, pick-up)

Administrative

Screening

- Temperature and symptom screening
- Testing for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19

Management and Communications

- Monitor state and local public health communications about COVID-19
- Encourage sick workers to report symptoms, stay home, and follow CDC guidance
- Develop strategies to:
  - manage worker concerns
  - communicate with workers
- Remind workers of available support services
- Communicate to partners, suppliers, other contractors on policies and practices
- Encourage social distancing and the use of masks (if appropriate) in the workplace
- Use technology to promote social distancing (e.g., telework and virtual meetings)
- Cancel group events
- Close/limit use of shared spaces
- Ask customers who are ill to stay home
- Consider policies that encourage flexible sick leave and alternative work schedules.
- Schedule stocking during off-peak hours
- Maintain a tobacco-free workplace

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, (e.g., counters, shelving, displays)
- Provide employees with disposable disinfectant wipes, cleaner, or sprays that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19

Training

Provide employees with training on:

- Policies to reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2
- General hygiene
- Symptoms, what to do if sick
- Cleaning and disinfection
- Masks

- Social distancing
- Use of PPE
- Safe work practices
- Stress management

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE

- Conduct workplace hazard assessment
- Determine what PPE is needed for workers' specific job duties based on hazards and other controls present
- Select and provide appropriate PPE to the workers at no cost

Related Pages

- COVID-19 Website
- Business and Workplaces webpage
- General Business Frequently Asked Questions
- Small Business
- Transportation and Delivery
- What You Need to Know About COVID-19
- What to Do If You Are Sick With COVID-19
- What Workers and Employers Can Do to Manage Workplace Fatigue during COVID-19
- People at Higher Risk of Severe Illness
- Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposures
- Public Health Recommendations after Travel-Associated COVID-19 Exposure
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's Small Business International Travel Resource Travel Planner
- Managing Workplace Fatigue

More Information

Health Alert Network

Travelers' Health Website

OSHA COVID-19 Website

OSHA Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace

Previous Updates

Updates from Previous Content

As of May 6, 2020

- Updated strategies and recommendations for employers responding to COVID-19, including those seeking to resume normal or phased business operations:
  - Conducting daily health checks
  - Conducting a hazard assessment of the workplace
  - Encouraging employees to wear cloth face coverings in the workplace, if appropriate
  - Implementing policies and practices for social distancing in the workplace
  - Improving the building ventilation system
- A table outlining the engineering controls, administrative controls, and personal protective equipment (PPE) that employers may use to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace

As of March 21, 2020

- Updated cleaning and disinfection guidance
- Updated best practices for conducting social distancing
- Updated strategies and recommendations that can be implemented now to respond to COVID-19

Last Updated Mar. 8, 2021