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

Summary of Recent Changes

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

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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 housingexternal icon, 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 localexternal icon 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 strategiespdf icon 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 pdf iconexternal iconfor 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) external iconor the Families First Coronavirus Response Actexternal icon.

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 (^{o}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 Commissionexternal icon 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^o F (38.0^o 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 workplaceexternal icon. Conduct a thorough hazard assessmentexternal icon 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 assessmentexternal icon 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 standardsexternal icon 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 assessmentexternal icon 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-19external icon webpage for more information on how to protect workers from potential SARS-CoV-2 exposures and guidance for employerspdf iconexternal icon, 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

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 surfacesexternal icon, use products that meet EPA criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2external icon, 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)external icon.
- 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 infrastructureexternal icon 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-2external icon, 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) external iconor the Families First Coronavirus Response Act external icon.
- Employers with fewer than 500 employees are eligible for 100% tax creditsexternal icon 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 employeesexternal icon 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)external icon has established guidance regarding Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Actexternal icon. 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'sexternal icon and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission'sexternal icon 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 filtrationexternal icon 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 systemspdf icon 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 Pandemicexternal icon 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-19external icon 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.

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 Resourcepdf icon, 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.

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.

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 assessmentexternal icon
- 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

Previous Updates

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