

In the community Workplace

COVID-19 Guidance

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 during widespread community outbreaks of COVID-19.

Create an atmosphere that encourages sick employees to stay home and not return until they are better.

- **Employees who have symptoms of respiratory illness like COVID-19 should stay home.**
- **Employees who are ill should not return to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F 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.** Ask that 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.**
 - 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.
 - Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member.
- **Talk with companies that provide your business with contract work and temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home** and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- **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).**

The symptoms of COVID-19 include:

Fever



Cough



Shortness of Breath



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.**

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.
- **Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace.** Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.

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Employees who have traveled to an area with ongoing COVID-19 transmission or have been in contact with an individual with COVID-19, and develop a fever, shortness of breath and a cough, should contact their medical provider for further instructions.

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Perform routine environmental cleaning:

- **Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace.** Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label. The Environmental Protection Agency has a [list of products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2, the cause of COVID-19](#) at www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2.
- **Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down by employees before each use.**

Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps:

- **Check [CDC's Traveler's Health Notices](#)** for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel at www.cdc.gov/travel/notices.
- **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.

Plan for a possible COVID-19 outbreak in the US

The severity of illness or how many people will fall from COVID-19 is unknown at this time. 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.

Employers 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
- (d) minimizing adverse effects on other entities in their supply chains.

Some of the key considerations when making decisions on appropriate responses are:

- **Set up authorities, triggers, and procedures** for activating and terminating the company's infectious disease outbreak response plan, altering business operations, and transferring business knowledge to key employees. Work closely with your local health officials to identify these triggers.
- **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:
 - **Cross-train personnel to perform essential functions** so that the workplace is able to operate even if key staff members are absent.

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**For more information visit
www.gnrhealth.com/covid-19-info**

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- **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.
- **Explore flexible worksites, and flexible work hours** to increase physical distance among and between employees and others.
 - Ensure that you have the information technology and infrastructure needed to support multiple employees who may be able to work from home.
- **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.
- 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.
- **Coordinate with state and local health officials so that timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses in each location where their operations reside.**
- **Identify possible work-related exposure and health risks to your employees.**
- **Establish a process to communicate information to employees and business partners** on your infectious disease outbreak response plans and latest COVID-19 information.
- **Consider canceling non-essential business travel** to additional countries per travel guidance on the CDC website.
- **Consider cancelling large work-related meetings or events.**
- **Increase physical space between workers at the worksite.**
- **Consider regular health checks** (e.g., temperature and respiratory symptom screening) of staff and visitors entering buildings (if feasible).

Review CDC's guidance for businesses and employers.

Review CDC guidance to identify strategies the childcare can use, given its role as an employer at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>.

The following websites offer reliable information for COVID-19:

Centers for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Georgia Department of Public Health

<https://dph.georgia.gov/novelcoronavirus>

Gwinnett, Newton and Rockdale County Health Departments

<https://gnrhealth.com/covid-19-info>



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