



Guidance on Coronavirus for Employers

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses 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 Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) began spreading person to person in China and, more recently, in countries outside China, including the United States.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued a document titled **Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-2019), February 2020** to help prevent workplace exposures to acute respiratory illnesses, including COVID-2019, in non-healthcare settings. The guidance recommends actions employers can take now and provides planning considerations if there are more widespread, community outbreaks of COVID-2019. The interim guidance is based on what is currently known about COVID-2019. The CDC will update this interim guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has also developed a **COVID-19 resource webpage** which provides information for workers and employers about the evolving coronavirus outbreak. The information includes links to interim guidance and other resources for preventing exposures to, and infections with, COVID-2019.

Hygiene Etiquette

Hygiene etiquette involves practices that prevent the spread of illness and disease. A critical time to practice good hygiene etiquette is when you are sick, especially when coughing or sneezing. Serious respiratory illnesses are easily spread by:

- Coughing or sneezing
- Touching your face after touching contaminated objects
- Unclean hands
- Touching objects after contaminating your hands

To help stop the spread of germs:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Put your used tissue in a waste basket.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- **Wash your hands** with soap and water after coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol to clean hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are ill, try to distance yourself from others so you do not spread your germs.

Employer and Employee Practices

Employers should:

- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home if they have symptoms of acute respiratory illness.
- Emphasize respiratory etiquette, and hygiene etiquette by all employees.
- Make tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles available for use by employees.
- Provide hand-washing facilities in the workplace.

- The CDC recommends routinely cleaning 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 following the directions on the label. They do not recommend additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning 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.

Employees should:

- Notify their employer, in accordance with company policies, and stay home if they are sick.
- Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness should stay home and not go to work until they are symptom free, pursuant to CDC recommendations.

Finally, the COVID-19 outbreak is an evolving situation, with continuously updated information/guidance. Employers should consult the CDC and their state health department for the most up-to-date planning and response information.

For more information visit:

- CDC [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Page](#)
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) [Coronavirus-2019 Page](#)
- OSHA [COVID-19 Webpage](#)
- CDC [Good Health Habits for Preventing Seasonal Flu](#) page

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