



COVID-19 in the Workplace: Employer Guidance

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It first appeared in China in 2019 and has since resulted in a worldwide pandemic, affecting almost every country.

Disease prevention involves training, physical distancing, face coverings, hand washing/personal hygiene, and cleaning and disinfecting, based on guidance developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing means maintaining a distance of 6 feet (2 m) from others and avoiding large gatherings. Employers should consider the following strategies to maintain physical distancing:

- Implement flexible worksites (e.g., telework) and flexible work hours.
- Increase the distance between employees by modifying the workspace.
- Increase the distance 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.
- Close or limit access to common areas where employees are likely to congregate and interact.
- Prohibit handshaking and other physical greetings.
- Deliver services remotely.
- 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.

Face Coverings

The primary mode of transmission of COVID-19 is through respiratory droplets. Face coverings have been proven to limit the spread of COVID-19 when used consistently and correctly. Therefore, it is critical that employees use face coverings.

- In situations where employees cannot maintain physical distancing, face coverings should be used.
- Face coverings should always be used in accordance with federal, local and state mandates.

Hand Washing and Personal Hygiene

Keeping hands clean through improved hand hygiene is an important step to take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Employers should:

- Provide adequate handwashing facilities in the workplace, with soap and water.
- If soap and water are not readily available, provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene.
- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
- Ensure that adequate supplies of soap, water, tissues, hand sanitizers, and disposal receptacles are maintained.

Cleaning/Disinfecting

Cleaning refers to the removal of dirt and impurities, including germs, from surfaces. Cleaning alone does not kill germs. However, removing germs decreases their number and, therefore, the risk of spreading infection.

Disinfecting works by using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but killing germs remaining on a surface after cleaning further reduces any risk of spreading infection. Employers should:

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.
- 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.
- Use products to disinfect 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. [Follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#).

Other Measures

Employers should consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system. Consult with a ventilation professional. This may include some or all of the following activities:

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

Training/Awareness

Educate employees about how they can reduce the spread of COVID-19. Explain the policies and procedures related to issues such as illness, cleaning and disinfecting, and work meetings and travel. Items to cover include:

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use the inside of your elbow. After use, dispose of tissues properly and wash your hands immediately.
- 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.
- Avoid shaking hands and minimize physical contact.
- 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 following workplace procedures.
- Practice physical distancing.

For more information:

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

Because guidance is changing as more information is learned, it is important to check the CDC and your health department for the most current guidance, as well as for additional and more detailed guidance on how employers can prepare and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Utica Mutual Insurance Company and its affiliated companies, New Hartford, NY 13413
www.uticanational.com • 1.800.598.8422