

Call Centers: Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers

Plan, Prepare, and Respond to COVID-19

Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

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 illness going from person to person, severity, and other features of COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing. Updates are available on Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) [COVID-19](#) web page.

Recommended Strategies Specific to Call Centers

- Distance workers by placing a minimum of every other desk/workstation.
- Thoroughly disinfect workstation between shifts and between use of employees.

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 [38.0° 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 and/or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
 - Ensure sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and 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 manner.
 - Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than usual.
- **Separate sick employees:**
 - CDC recommends 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 be separated from other employees and sent home immediately. Sick employees 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 the 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 wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or when soap is not available, clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace. Ensure 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 cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow directions on the label.
 - No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.
 - Provide disposable wipes for commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) to be wiped down by employees before each use.
 - For an additional list of recommended disinfection products visit the [EPA website](#).
- **Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps:**
 - Check the [CDC's Traveler's Health Notices](#) for latest guidance and recommendations for each country. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from China, and information for aircrew, can be found on the [CDC website](#).
 - Advise employees to self-check for symptoms of [acute respiratory illness](#) before starting travel, and stay home if they are sick.
 - Employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment should notify their supervisor and promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
 - If outside the United States, sick employees should follow the company's policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to assist 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 legal authority, capability, or resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.
- **Additional Measures in Response to Bringing in COVID-19:**
 - Employees who are well but 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 staff of possible exposure 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 potential exposure.

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