

## **Protocol for Businesses to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in your Workplace**

---

The corona virus outbreak has been declared pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO). All employers should be ready to implement strategies to protect their employees and their workplace while ensuring continuity of operations during this unprecedented situation.

By adopting the recommendations below, enterprises can help to:

- slow and/or stop transmission if any, and delay spread in the community
- speed up and help access to optimised care for potentially infected employees
- minimise the impact of the epidemic on health systems, social services and national economic activity

### **DEDICATED RESPONSE TEAM**

---

Businesses are advised to set-up a dedicated response team to increase their level of preparedness, alert and response to mitigate the impact of Covid-19.

#### **The team will help to:**

- implement clear internal and external protocols for managing coronavirus risk at the workplace and
- set-up regular communication modes with employees and other key stakeholders.

### **SIMPLE WAYS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN YOUR WORKPLACE**

---

#### **1. Thoroughly Relay Covid-19 Health and Safety Requirements**

- *Place notices in entranceways, washrooms, lunchrooms, and public areas; use staff emails, intranet, newsletters, information in pay slips etc*
  - For official international Covid-19 health and prevention-related updated information and readymade information posters:
    - <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>
- *Health & safety requirements at work to include:*
  - Regular and thorough hand washing
    - Employers to provide sanitisers/soap and water

- Employees to wash hands thoroughly and regularly with soap and water and/or sanitize
- Principles of hygienic coughing and sneezing
  - keep distance from others when coughing or sneezing,
  - cough or sneeze into tissues (or in your elbow/shoulder if no tissue available), dispose of used tissues in a covered bin
- Social distancing in the workplace which includes:
  - Stop handshaking
  - Hold meeting via video conferencing or phone calls
  - Defer large face to face meetings
  - Hold essential meetings outside in the open air
  - Promote good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene and provide hand sanitizers for all staff and workers
  - Take lunch at your desk or outside rather than in the lunch room
  - Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly
  - Consider opening windows and adjusting air conditioning for more ventilation
  - Limit food handling and sharing of food in the workplace
  - Reconsider non-essential business travel
  - Consider if large gatherings can be rescheduled, staggered or cancelled
- *Assist employees to cope with stress during the pandemic*
  - Encourage employees to get the facts and relay information that will help them accurately determine the risk so that they can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or a local health agency.

For more information on stress management linked to Covid-19 pandemic from WHO:

[https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a\\_2](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a_2)

## **2. Provide Washing and Waste Disposal Facilities**

- Provide hand washing (soap and water/sanitizer) and drying facilities
  - Put sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the workplace. Make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled.
  - Display posters promoting good hand-washing practices
  - Combine this with other communication measures such as offering guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefings at meetings and information on the intranet to promote hand-washing
  - Make sure that staff, contractors and customers have access to places where they can wash their hands with soap and water
- Provide covered bins for used tissues etc
- Set up system for disposing bin contents and disinfecting bins

## **3. Provide a Clean, Well-Ventilated Workplace**

- Clean surfaces thoroughly and regularly with detergent then disinfectant
- Ensure surfaces frequently touched by hands are cleaned daily
- Ensure cups, dishes and cutlery are washed with detergent and hot water
- Do not share cups, dishes or cutlery
- Remove magazines, newspapers etc from reception areas and lunchrooms

## **4. Provide Personal Protective Equipment if Required Depending on your Industry**

- Follow official advice of WHO or our local authorities on whether provision of protective gear such as face masks, disposable gloves, eye splash protection or disposable overalls is advised or if required, depending on your industry and on availability of such equipment
- Inform staff about requirements to use personal protective equipment and ensure they are trained how to use and dispose of it

Please note that the World Health Organisation (WHO) advises that we use such equipment with thorough discernment as there are disruptions in the global supply chain of personal protective equipment.

**5. Organise work and workflow to reduce risk of infection where possible. Here are some suggested examples if relevant:**

- Actively investigate possibilities of work from home, or introduce shifts when and where possible
- Thoroughly ventilate the workplace between shifts
- Stagger start, finish and break times so fewer people are together at once
- Deal with clients and suppliers by phone, email or messaging
- Cancel or postpone non-essential meetings, training sessions and other gatherings.
- If face-to-face meetings are necessary:
  - provide large rooms so people can be at least a metre away from each other

**6. Working from Home**

Reducing face to face contact is an excellent measure to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. Depending on your location and the spread of COVID -19, your business may need to ask employees to work from home or you're your employees may ask to work from home. With this however, comes a number of practical implications to consider.

Firstly, not every position and every activity can be conducted from an employee's home but in an increasingly service based economy/IT based jobs perhaps can more than ever before and this will be an immediate consideration for many workplaces if the spread of COVID-19 virus worsens.

**7. Monitor Workplace Health**

- Set up a system for monitoring the health of staff members and visitors
- Set up a system for staff to report suspected cases of infection
- Ensure staff know how to use these systems
- Link up / employ a health professional for your office

**8. Communication**

- Provide clear advice to workers about actions they should take if they become unwell or think that they have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should stay at home and notify their employer.

- We recommend employers to provide regular update on COVID-19 to employees so that they feel informed, well supported and stay motivated to assist and adapt to this time.
- Employers should make sure that employees are aware of any on-going obligations around issues and policies such as confidentiality and safe work practices whilst working at home.

## **WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS SUSPECTED INFECTION AT WORK**

---

- Get your office prepared for such an eventuality:
  - Identify a room or area where an employee who is feeling unwell or has symptoms can be safely isolated immediately while preparing for future immediate action.
  - Have a plan for how they can be safely transferred from the office to home or a health facility if relevant.
  - An employee with suspected Covid-19 infection (sometimes fever, sore throat, dry cough) should be told to do the following:
    - Ideally not go to the hospital directly but rather encouraged to contact a health professional immediately.
    - Encourage him/her to also contact the Hotline 8924 (working hours) or 8928 (after working hours) for further instructions.
    - Encourage him/her to isolate himself/herself immediately so as not to infect others around him/her while waiting to see his/her health professional.
  - Identify the people that person has been in contact with (in your office and outside in the course of his duties if possible), tell them they have been in contact with suspected infection, and ask them to go home immediately and stay home until advised otherwise
  - Thoroughly clean and disinfect the person's work area
  - Workers also have a duty to take reasonable care for their own and others' health and safety. This includes ensuring good hygiene practices, such as frequent hand washing to protect against infections.

**10 March 2021**