



COVID-19: Businesses and Employers

Below is guidance for businesses and employers for responding to COVID-19.

Guidance for Employers

What can I do now to prepare for COVID-19 impacts to my workplace?

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.

When making plans, employers should consider levels of occupational risk, local disease severity, and the potential impact of disease on vulnerable employees and customers. The [Occupational Health and Safety Administration has developed guidance](#) to help assess occupational risk and lists a number of examples to help workplaces prepare for COVID-19.

Employers should also prepare for increased numbers of absences. School closures, day care closures, illness in employees and their family members, and other factors may contribute to higher rates of employee absence. Employers should develop and implement plans to respond to absenteeism at the workplace that relates to continuing your essential business functions. To the extent possible, find ways to cross-train personnel to perform essential functions so that the workplace is able to operate, even if key staff members are absent. See the [Department of Labor's Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#) for additional information and resources.

Employers should ensure that their sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance, and that employees are aware of these policies.

What can I do to slow or prevent COVID-19 illnesses my workplace?

Educate Employees and Prepare Customers on Prevention Efforts

Place posters at the entrance to your workplace and in other areas where they are likely to be seen reminding employees to stay home when sick, practice cough and sneeze etiquette, and perform hand hygiene. CDC has posters with messages for staff about [staying home when sick](#) and how to [avoid spreading germs](#).

Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees and customers

Instruct employees to [clean their hands often](#) with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Place posters in restrooms with instructions for employees on how to wash their hands with soap and water and how to exit the restroom without contaminating their hands.

Advise employees to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

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

Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

Whenever possible, maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from others.

Perform routine environmental cleaning.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. See the [CDC COVID-19 Disinfection Guidance](#).

If an individual with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 has visited your workplace, more stringent [environmental cleaning and disinfection protocols](#) should be followed.

Involve your human resources department or employee health for further guidance or under the following circumstances:

Employees who are well but have a family member at home who is sick with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor that they will not be attending work and quarantine themselves and any other household contacts. Family medical leave or other legal contracts may apply.

Individuals who are asymptomatic and have no knowledge of being exposed to someone with COVID-19 can attend work unless they have a possible [travel exposure](#).

Public health officials will only contact employers about positive cases among their employees if there is a concern about compliance with isolation requirements or if there is a risk that other employees or others were exposed and needs the cooperation of the employer to locate those individuals. Public health does not routinely contact employers when the risk to other employees or others is low.

If an employee shares that they have COVID-19 infection, 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) and not share anything about the employee's illness with other staff members.

Develop policies and procedures for prompt identification and isolation of sick people, when appropriate.

Inform employees of the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and develop policies and procedures for employees to report when they are sick or experiencing fever (>100.4°F) AND/OR respiratory symptoms (for example, cough, shortness of breath).

Immediately isolate individuals who have signs and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness. Move potentially infectious people to a location away from workers, customers, and other visitors. Although most worksites do not have specific isolation rooms, designated areas with closable doors may serve as isolation rooms until potentially sick people can be removed from the worksite. Restrict the number of personnel entering isolation areas.

Actively encourage employees with any acute respiratory illness to stay home.

Ensure that employees who have symptoms of respiratory illness stay home and do not come to work until they are free of fever (>100.4°F) AND respiratory symptoms (for example, cough, shortness of breath) for at least three days (72 hours) without the use of fever-reducing medicine AND seven days have passed since symptoms first appeared. Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.

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 health care provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work.

Encourage employees who have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 to stay home from work and self-monitor.

DHS recommends that employees who are told they have a medium or high-risk exposure should be excluded from work for 14 days during which they should monitor for symptoms and/or fever.

Health care workers who have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 do not need to be excluded from work, but should self-monitor for symptoms and complete daily symptom checks in coordination with their employer.

Travel-related work restrictions.

At this time, employers are encouraged to enact policies to restrict work-related travel for essential staff to reduce potential exposure to COVID-19.

See [DHS guidance on travel related restrictions](#).

When can a recovering COVID-19 patient return to work?

CDC has issued updated [interim guidance](#) describing two strategies for determining when health care personnel can return to work when they have laboratory confirmed COVID-19, or who have suspected COVID-19 (for example, developed symptoms of a respiratory infection but did not get tested for COVID-19).

Employers with staff who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 who have not had any symptoms may discontinue home isolation when at least seven days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test and have had no subsequent illness. See [CDC guidance](#).

In all cases, employees should follow the guidance of their health care provider and local health department. The decision to stop home isolation should be made in consultation with their health care provider and state and local health departments. Local decisions depend on local circumstances. More information is available on the [CDC website](#).

Where can I turn for more information?

[Wisconsin Department of Health Services, COVID-19 webpage](#)

[Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, COVID-19 webpage](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, COVID-19 webpage](#)

[Guidance for Travelers, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[OSHA COVID-19 webpage](#)

[Guidance for Long-Term Care Facilities](#)

See the [Health Care Provider page](#) for the long-term care guidance.