



Workplace Guidance COVID-19

Technical Guidelines for Preventing Corona Virus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Spread at Workplace

Background:

Since December 2019 there has been an ongoing outbreak of novel corona virus disease that has been named by WHO as Corona Virus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Within a relatively short period the disease has spread to several countries across the globe. Due to the globalization and frequent travel, it's of crucial importance that all organizations ensure the safety of their employees, avoid high risk activities, develop business continuity plans and minimize the risk of spread on infection at the workplace by the following preventive measures. Most patients experience mild symptoms; however, some patients especially those with underlying diseases might require hospitalization

Mode of Spread:

When someone who has COVID-19 disease coughs or exhales the released droplets of infected fluid fall on nearby surfaces and objects - such as desks, tables or telephones. People could catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. If they are standing within one meter of a person with COVID-19 they can catch it by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them.

High Risk:

People above 40 years of age, those with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are more prone to serious illness.

Preventive Measures at Workplace:

• **Cleaning & Disinfection:**

Surfaces (e.g. desks and tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards) need to be wiped with a disinfectant regularly.

Perform routine environmental cleaning:

- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. with regular disinfectant containing a diluted bleach solution (1-part bleach to 99 parts water). For surfaces that do not tolerate bleach, 70% ethanol can be used.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.
- All frequently touched areas, such as all accessible surfaces of walls and windows, the toilet bowl and bathroom surfaces, should be also carefully cleaned.

- **Hand Hygiene:**

- Promote regular and thorough handwashing by employees, contractors and customers
- Put sanitizing hand rub dispensers* in prominent places around the workplace. Make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled
- Display posters promoting handwashing
- 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 handwashing
- Make sure that staff, contractors and customers have access to places where they can wash their hands with soap and water

- **Respiratory hygiene & cough etiquette:**

- Promote good respiratory hygiene in the workplace
- Display posters promoting respiratory hygiene.
- Combine this with other communication measures such as offering guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefing at meetings and information on the intranet etc.
- Ensure that surgical face masks and / or paper tissues are available at your workplaces, for those who develop a runny nose or cough at work, along with closed bins for hygienically disposing of them

- Advise employees and contractors to avoid/postpone business trips to countries experiencing ongoing outbreaks of COVID-19

- Develop work from home policy: if COVID-19 starts spreading in the community, those employees with even a mild cough or low-grade fever (37.30C or more) needs to stay at home.

- Keep communicating and promoting the message that people need to stay at home even if they have just mild symptoms of COVID-19.
- Display posters with this message in your workplaces.
- Combine this with other communication channels commonly used in your organization or business.
- The occupational health services should develop campaign materials to promote this message
- Make clear to employees that they will be able to count this time off as sick leave.

- **Things to consider when you and your employees travel:**

- **Before traveling;**

- Make sure your organization and its employees have the latest information on areas where COVID-19 is spreading. You can find this at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>
- Based on the latest information, your organization should assess the benefits and risks related to upcoming travel plans.

- Avoid sending employees who may be at higher risk of serious illness (e.g. older employees and those with medical conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease) to areas where COVID-19 is spreading.
- Make sure all persons travelling to locations reporting COVID-19 are updated on the basic principles of preventing the infection
- Consider issuing employees who are about to travel with small bottles (under 100 CL) of alcohol-based hand rub. This can facilitate regular handwashing.
- **While traveling:**
 - Encourage employees to wash their hands regularly and stay at least one meter away from people who are coughing or sneezing
 - Ensure employees know what to do and who to contact if they feel ill while traveling.
 - Ensure that your employees comply with instructions from local authorities where they are traveling. If, for example, they are told by local authorities not to go somewhere they should comply with this. Your employees should comply with any local restrictions on travel, movement or large gatherings.
- **When you or your employees return from traveling:**
 - Employees who have returned from an area where COVID-19 is spreading should monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days and take their temperature twice a day.
 - If they develop even a mild cough or low-grade fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.3 C or more) or cough etc they should stay contact their health care provider for further assessment. They should wear a mask when visiting the health care facility and inform the triage/greetings nurse of their recent history of travel.

- **Getting your business ready in case COVID-19 arrives in your community**

Develop a plan of what to do if someone becomes ill with suspected COVID-19 at one of your workplaces

- The plan should cover putting the ill person in a room or area where they are isolated from others in the workplace, limiting the number of people who have contact with the sick person and contacting the local health authorities.
- Consider how to identify persons who may be at risk, and support them, without inviting stigma and discrimination into your workplace. This could include persons who have recently travelled to an area reporting cases, or other personnel who have conditions that put them at higher risk of serious illness (e.g. diabetes, heart and lung disease, older age).
- Promote regular teleworking across your organization.
- **Develop a contingency and business continuity plan for an outbreak in the communities where your business operates**

Communicate to your employees and contractors about the plan and make sure they are aware of what they need to do – or not do – under the plan. Emphasize key points such as the importance of staying away from work even if they have only mild symptoms or have had to take simple medications (e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen) which may mask the symptoms

Be sure your plan addresses the mental health and social consequences of a case of COVID-19 in the workplace or in the community and offer information and support.

*Hand sanitizers containing alcohol (ethanol or ethyl alcohol), isopropyl alcohol or benzalkonium chloride

References:

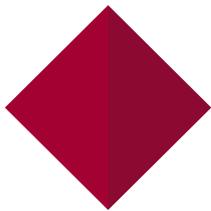
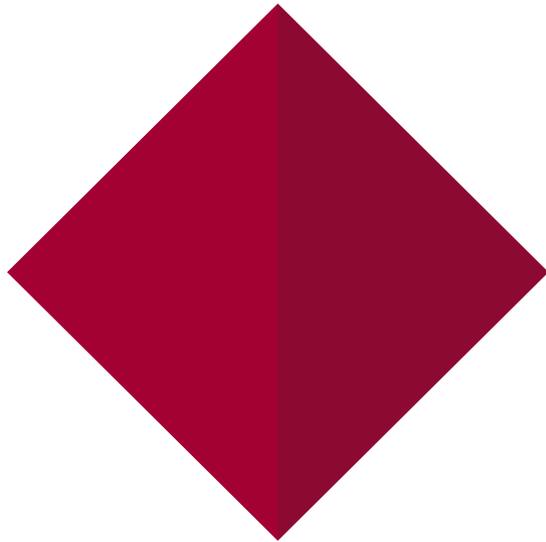
Updates from MOPH, Qatar

<https://www.moph.gov.qa/english/Pages/Coronavirus2019.aspx>

Find the latest information from WHO on where COVID-19 is spreading: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>

Advice and guidance from WHO on COVID-19 <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019> <https://www.epi-win.com/>

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fguidance-business-response.html



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