

COVID-19 Employee Briefing

What You Need to Know

Symptoms

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature).
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- Anosmia; meaning the loss of or a change in your normal sense of smell. It can also affect your sense of taste.

These symptoms often begin mild and will increase gradually. However, many people who have COVID-19 can be asymptomatic, meaning they do not show symptoms.

How is it Spread?

- The virus spreads between people through small droplets when a person with COVID-19 exhales, coughs or sneezes.
- The droplets are then inhaled by another person, or lands on objects or surfaces which another person may come into contact with who then touches their eyes, nose or mouth.
- It is unknown how long the virus can live on surfaces, but it is thought it can live anywhere up to 48 hours, dependent on the type of surface and conditions.
- Given these modes of transmission, the virus is likely to pass from person to person in communal areas where it is not possible to maintain safe distances between persons.

What You Need To Do To Help Stop the Spread

Getting to Work

- Wherever possible travel to work should be alone using your own private transport. If this is not possible, journeys should be shared with individuals of the same fixed team and keep windows open to keep the vehicle well ventilated.
- Vehicles should also be cleaned regularly, focusing on handles and other areas where passengers may touch surfaces.
- You should avoid using public transport.
- Bikes or walking should be prioritised over any use of public transport.
- Not to travel to work if contacted by Test and Trace team – implement self-isolation procedure inline with NHS guidance. Notify line manager and implement Covid-19 Workplace management procedure.

COVID-19 is a workplace hazard, no different to any others, such as physical hazards like electricity or micro-organism such as legionella. Employers have moral and legal duties to protect their workers from workplace risks through engineering, procedural and behavioural preventative and protective measures and, as such, this talk will cover what COVID-19 is and what measures are required to control it.

If you feel unwell at all, take a Lateral Flow Test BEFORE going into work.

Social Distancing

- It is recommended you should always keep at least 2-metres away from other workers not in your fixed team, including during breaks.
- All work should be planned to minimise the number of contacts workers have and allow for employees to work from home where possible.
- All work should be planned to minimise the contact between workers and adapted so that 2-metre social distancing can be maintained. Where not possible additional risk mitigation measure are required.
- If 2-metre social distancing is not possible, contact time must be minimised, the number of workers assigned to the task must be minimised and you should work side by side or facing away from each other rather than face to face.
- Where 2-metre social distancing cannot be maintained and works cannot be completed within a minimal amount of time, then works should be assigned to a fixed team with additional risk assessment undertaken and RAMS adapted; these amendments must be recorded and approved by management.
- Meetings should only be held if electronic meetings are not possible, with the minimum number of people or outdoors as a preference. Only absolutely necessary participants should physically attend appointments and should maintain social distancing guidelines.
- If PPE is worn, it should be thoroughly cleaned after use and kept strictly to one user. Any single use PPE should be disposed of after use.

General Hygiene

- Good general hygiene measures should be followed. This means catching any coughs or sneezes in a tissue or the crook of the elbow, and regularly washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or using 60% alcohol or virucidal hand sanitiser). Surfaces and tools should also be cleaned down after use. You should also avoid touching your eyes, nose or face and avoid spitting wherever possible.
- Extra cleaning should be undertaken on any surfaces that are likely to have come into contact with people. High risk areas include: Taps, Handles, Handrails, Machinery, Equipment Controls, Welfare Surfaces, Hand Rails and telephones.
- Tools should be used by one person where possible and cleaned after use if they are to be shared between workers.

Mitigating Actions Include:

- Further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
- Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible.
- Using screens or barriers to separate people from each other.
- Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible.
- Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using fixed teams or 'partnering' (so each person works with only a few others).
- Face coverings should be provided and worn in the workplace where government advice specifies it's necessary, such as in publicly accessible areas. Exemptions for individuals may apply as a consequence of health conditions. Exempt persons may be identifiable through the use of an exemption card.
- Face coverings must also be worn where the workplace is an enclosed space, social distancing isn't always possible, and you may come into contact with others you do not normally meet or outside your fixed team.
- Face Coverings are recommended when walking around the workplace.

Self Isolation

- If you live with someone or believe you have been in contact with someone who is suspected, or has been confirmed, of having COVID-19 and you have not been fully vaccinated you must not come to work.
- If you have tested positive for the Omicron variant, even if you have been fully vaccinated, then you must self-isolate for 10 days (or longer if you still have symptoms) and await a negative PCR test result.
- If you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for the Omicron variant, even if you have been fully vaccinated, then you must self-isolate and await a negative PCR test result.
- If self-isolating you must stay at home for 10 days (or longer if you still have symptoms), if you live with other people, they should all stay at home for 10 days. You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you are staying at home. Use the NHS 111 online Coronavirus service if your symptoms progress and you want additional support.
- If you arrive from abroad, you must isolate and take a PCR test before the end of day 2 following your return. If it is a positive result, then you must self-isolate for 10 days (or longer if you still have symptoms), even if you are fully vaccinated.
- When you start showing symptoms, you can apply for a COVID-19 test to carry out at home if you are over 65, or you cannot work from home, or you live with someone in these categories: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test>

Ventilation

- Provide ventilation by opening windows, vents and doors (excluding fire doors). Mechanical ventilation, such as fans, ducts and air conditioning, should be utilised to maximise fresh air. Ventilation should always be based on the room's maximum occupancy. Fan convactor heaters can be used to maintain room warmth.
- Mechanical ventilation should be set to draw in fresh air, not to recirculate existing air.
- "Purging" of rooms to be undertaken between meetings and activities by opening as many windows and doors as possible. Where avoidable air should not be circulated from one space to another in use.
- Ventilation systems should be turned on whilst using work vehicles: set to draw in fresh air, not to recirculate existing air. Windows should be kept open, with windows and doors opened when changing passengers to purge air in between trips.

Giving this Employee Briefing...

- Once this briefing is completed, all attendees should sign and date a register of attendance.
- In every toolbox talk or safety briefing, remember it is important to make sure your workers know that if at any time they consider they are working in an unsafe way, that puts themselves or others at risk, they can **STOP, report and seek advice!**