

## Infection or Pandemic Practices for Workplaces

Public health measures implemented in workplaces can be taken to prevent the spread of the virus causing COVID-19 in workplaces and other similar community settings. Further information on [preparing workplaces for COVID-19](#) is available from the WHO. Strategies that workplaces can put into effect include:

- Increased awareness about and communication to staff about COVID-19.
- Encouraging the use of individual measures described above such as frequent hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and self-isolation when ill.
- Evaluate the workplace for areas where people have frequent contact with each other and share spaces and objects.
- Workplaces/community settings should identify possible COVID-19 exposure risks and mitigation approaches. Although not conclusive, there may be benefit to increasing the spatial separation between desks and workstations as well as individuals (e.g., employees, customers) from each other, ideally a 2 metre separation should be maintained, unless there is a physical barrier (e.g., cubicle, Plexiglas window).
- Workplaces and other similar community settings are encouraged to increase frequency of cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (e.g., phones, elevator buttons, computers, desks, lunch tables, kitchens, washrooms, cash registers, seating areas, surface counters, customer service counters, bars, restaurant tables/menus).
- Provide access to handwashing facilities and place hand sanitizing dispensers in prominent locations throughout the workplace, if possible.
- Consider providing additional tissues should someone develop respiratory symptoms. If symptoms develop the person should immediately be separated from others, instructed on respiratory etiquette and sent home (not using public transit, if possible).
- Where feasible, adjustments to policies and procedures may be put in place to reduce social contact, such as teleworking arrangements, flexible hours, staggering start times, use of email and teleconferencing.
- For business travel, employers should be aware of the latest information on COVID-19 affected areas and any travel health advisories. The risks and benefits related to upcoming business travel should be assessed and consideration given to alternative approaches such as virtually attending meetings. Returning international business travellers returning from affected areas should self-monitor for symptoms and follow advice provide PHAs regarding the recommended actions.
- Consider relaxing sick leave policies that support employees in self-isolating when ill. This includes suspending the need for medical notes to return to work (reduces the burden on an already stressed health care system).
- Employers should prepare for increases in absenteeism due to illness among employees and their families or possibly school closures. Employers should access their business continuity plans, which should include a plan for how to

maintain key business functions if faced with high absenteeism. Consideration should also be given to the need for cross-training personnel to function in key positions. This is an important element of Business Continuity Planning.

- Workplace and community setting closures may be considered, based on local conditions and a risk assessment in an exceptional circumstance, such as if COVID-19 evolves into one with high severity and if many employees must be off to prevent transmission. The selection of measures will depend on the company and the type of work; some measures (e.g. cancellation or closures) may have significant economic consequences and decisions made based on a risk-benefit analysis.