



Pandemic Preparedness Tips for Businesses

The following guidance will help prevent workplace exposures to illnesses (including COVID-19) and also help trigger planning considerations for businesses in the event of widespread, community outbreaks.

Recommended Strategies to Use Now:

- **Actively encourage sick employees to stay home.**
 - Employees with symptoms of acute respiratory illness (fever, cough, shortness of breath) are recommended to stay home until fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of any fever-reducing medications.
 - Ensure sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of the policies.
 - Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees sick with acute respiratory illness to validate illness or return to work. Healthcare provider offices may be extremely busy and unable to provide documentation in a timely fashion.
 - Consider maintaining flexible policies to allow employees to stay home with a sick family member or children if school has been canceled.
- **Separate sick employees.**
 - Employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and sent home immediately.
- **Encourage respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.**
 - Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for employee use.
 - Post signs in common areas encouraging frequent hand-washing and respiratory etiquette (cover your cough).
 - Provide adequate soap and water and alcohol-based sanitizers throughout facility.
- **Perform frequent, routine environmental cleaning.**
 - Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use cleaning agents typically used and follow all directions on the label.
- **Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps.**
 - Check the CDC's travel website <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel> for updated information related to high-, medium- and low-risk geographic areas. Encourage all employees to ensure necessary precautions have been taken before traveling (vaccinations, anti-malarial medications, etc.).

- Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or soon after returning understand they should check themselves for respiratory symptoms and notify their supervisor and healthcare provider immediately.
- The situation is evolving every day, so employees need to be prepared to return to the possibility of a 14-day quarantine if they are visiting a high- or medium-risk location

Important Considerations for Creating an Infectious Disease Plan:

- ✓ Identify possible work-related exposure and health risks to your employees.
- ✓ Review human resource policies to make sure practices are consistent with public health recommendations and existing state and federal workplace laws.
- ✓ Explore the possibility of establishing new policies for flexible worksites and flexible work hours. Allowing employees to work from home or staggering hours to limit the number of people present in the office at one time can greatly decrease the risk of disease transmission.
- ✓ Identify essential business functions, essential jobs or roles, and critical elements within your supply chain required to maintain business operations. Plan for how your business will operate if there is an exceptional number of absences or an interruption in the supply chain.
- ✓ Establish a process to communicate your Infectious Disease Plan with your staff ahead of time if possible
- ✓ In some communities, schools may be dismissed, particularly if COVID-19 worsens. Determine how you will operate if absenteeism spikes from increases in sick employees, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from school.
- ✓ Consider canceling all non-essential business travel to additional countries per travel guidance on the CDC website.