Live Well, Work Well

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR RETURNING TO WORK AMID COVID-19

If you're going back to work during the COVID-19 pandemic, you may have some questions and concerns. This article compiles guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help keep you informed.

3 Essential Things to Know

If you remember nothing else from this guidance, let it be these three things:

1. Generally, the more closely you interact with others and the longer those interactions last, the higher your COVID-19 exposures are.
2. Continue to protect yourself by practicing everyday preventive actions even after returning to work.
3. Keep a mask, tissues and hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol nearby at all times, if possible.

Return-to-Work FAQs

This section includes questions and answers that can help inform your return to the workplace.

What do I do if I have COVID-19 or may have been exposed to it?

If you have or think you might have COVID-19, you should isolate, regardless of whether or not you have symptoms.

If you might have been exposed to COVID-19, you should stay home. This is called quarantine.

What should I do if someone in my household is at increased risk of severe illness?

If you are at increased risk for severe illness, check with your employer to see if there are policies and practices in place to reduce your risk at work, like telework or modified job responsibilities.

What should primary caregivers for children know?

Primary caregivers should review this information about caring for children.

If someone else will be providing care for a household member who is at increased risk of severe illness or needs extra precautions, ask them to review this information.

Are there ways I can minimize the number of people I interact with?

In addition to any measures your workplace may have implemented to reduce your risk (e.g., installing barriers), you can take further steps to minimize the number of people you interact with, such as utilizing virtual meetings.

Interacting with more people raises your risk, since some people may have COVID-19 and not know it because they have no symptoms. As such, when interacting

with other people, wear a mask, stay 6 feet apart and limit the length of the interaction as much as possible.

For what length of time is it safe to interact with others?
The answer to this question is still largely unknown. As such, the CDC recommends brief in-person interactions or no interactions at all.

Spending more time with people who may be infected increases your risk of becoming infected. And, if there is any chance that you may already have COVID-19, spending more time with people increases their risk of becoming infected.

Steps to Protect Yourself and Others in the Workplace
This section outlines methods for staying safe and minimizing the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Stay Home When Needed
If you have symptoms or have tested positive for COVID-19, stay home and find out what to do if you are sick and when you can be around others.

If you feel well, but you have a sick family member or recently had close contact with someone with COVID-19, notify your supervisor and follow CDC-recommended precautions.

Monitor Your Health
Be alert for symptoms. Watch for a fever, cough, shortness of breath or other symptoms of COVID-19. This is especially important if you are running essential errands, going into the workplace or lingering in settings where it may be difficult to keep a physical distance of 6 feet.

Take your temperature if symptoms develop. However, don't take your temperature within 30 minutes of exercising or after taking medications that could lower your temperature, like acetaminophen. Follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop.

Wear a Mask
Wear a mask in public settings, especially when staying 6 feet apart is not possible. Interacting without wearing a mask increases your risk of getting infected.

Wearing a mask does not replace the need to practice social distancing. Wear masks to help keep from getting and spreading COVID-19.

Social Distance in Shared Spaces
Masks are required on planes, buses, trains and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within or out of the United States. Masks are also required in U.S. transportation hubs, such as airports and stations.

Even while wearing a mask, you must maintain at least 6 feet of distance between you and others. COVID-19 spreads easier between people who are within 6 feet of each other. Keeping distance from other people is especially important for people who are at increased risk for severe illness, such as older adults and those with certain medical conditions.

Indoor spaces are riskier than outdoor spaces, as it can be harder to keep people apart and there's less ventilation.

Avoid close contact with others on your commute to work, if possible. Consider biking, walking or driving (either alone or with other members of your household). Learn how to protect yourself when using transportation to commute to work.

Wash Your Hands Often
Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. If your hands are visibly dirty, use soap and water over hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth if you haven't washed your hands.

Cover Your Coughs and Sneezes
Remember to cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues into no-touch trash cans and immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.

Avoid Sharing Objects and Equipment
Avoid using other employees' phones, desks or other workplace tools and equipment, when possible. If you cannot avoid using someone else's workstation, clean and disinfect it before and after each use.

Clean and Disinfect Frequently Touched Surfaces and Objects

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces—such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails and doorknobs. Dirty surfaces should be cleaned with soap and water before disinfection.

Choose the right disinfectant for your surface from the [Environmental Protection Agency's list of disinfectants for COVID-19](#).

Summary

It's important to maintain safe practices so that the workplace can continue operating smoothly. That means everyone must do their part to help limit the spread of COVID-19.