

Guideline to minimize Covid 19 transmission in work places

Introduction

Aim of this guideline is to provide practical guidance for national and local authorities, employers and employees to prevent the transmission of COVID 19 and manage COVID 19 outbreaks at work in non-healthcare settings while ensuring physical, mental and social well-being of workers.

Practices directed at preventing transmission in the workplace

1. Conduct workplace assessment for potential occupational exposure to COVID 19

Assess work place according to the risk of exposure.

- **Low exposure risk** –Work places without frequent, close contact with the general public. E.g. Executive officers
- **Medium exposure risk** – Work places where COVID 19 cases continue to be reported and frequent and close contact with general public and places which are airconditioned, confined places with poor ventilation.E.g. Food market, bus station, public transport, schools,banks
- **High exposure risk** – Work places with close contact with people who are known or suspected of having COVID 19 E.g. Hospitals

2. Plan for a gradual and safe workplace reopening

- Shift to remote work as much as possible
- Take stock of suppliers needed for safe reopening (masks, hand hygiene suppliers, physical barriers, educational materials)
- Assess worker specific risk assessment before reopening
- Conduct a symptom survey of workers before reopening
- Train all workers about reopening protocols remotely
- Reopen partially at first with key workers who have minimal personal risk factors and low exposure risk

3. Implement safety and health measures to prevent transmission at the workplace

Hand hygiene

- Make handwashing facilities or sanitizing hand rub dispensers available to employees and customers at the main entrances as well as suitable other places.
- Ensure the hand rub dispensers are regularly refilled and soap and water are freely available at all time.
- Demonstrate the correct handwashing technique by posters, leaflets, via LCD panels
- Implement a monitoring system to assess compliance



Rational use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Medical masks should be used by all workers, customers and visitors
- Provide face or eye protection (medical mask, face shields, or goggles) during cleaning procedures that generate splashes
- Ensure proper disposal of PPE and provide paddle operated waste bins
- Conduct regular training and monitoring of using face mask and PPE correctly

Physical distancing

- Maintain safe physical distance in accordance with national regulations. Use signs, tape marks or other visual cues such as colour floor markings and signs as a reminder to maintain physical distancing.
- Use methods to physically separate employees in all areas of building, including work areas and other areas such as meeting rooms, rest room, entrance and exit areas and locker rooms.
E.g. Arrange chairs in reception area by marking with tape
- Discourage direct physical contact with other persons and social gatherings
- Stagger workplace entrance and exit time to avoid crowding
- Avoid shared transportation and working, biking, or using private vehicle should be encouraged
- Minimize physical meetings by encouraging teleconferences

Conducting meetings

- Encourage remote work and virtual meetings
- Conduct physical meetings only if mandatory in a well ventilated, spacious room with open doors and windows
 - Minimize the number of attendees
 - Do not shake hands with the participants, instead say 'Ayubowan'
 - Maintain a distance of 1m between participants
 - Follow all the hygienic measures outlined above.

Rest rooms

- Avoid all kind of gatherings as much as possible
- Do not allow eating and drinking as groups and sharing belongings
- Encourage staff to bring their own meal and water or consider installing no-touch methods.
- Allocate times for each staff member to use the rest room in order to prevent dinging together
- Do not allow the staff to be in the rest room taking off their masks and stay within 1 meter of each other during night shifts

Environmental cleaning and disinfection

- Clean and disinfect high traffic areas and high touch surfaces using soap and water or a detergent multiple time daily.
E.g. door handles, desks, light switches, work stations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and printers. Clean and disinfect toilets frequently.
- Avoid area spraying of entire rooms, outdoor areas or persons as it is potentially toxic



- Workers must be provided with regular training on proper cleaning and appropriate personal protective equipment

Ventilation

- Natural ventilation such as opening windows should be recommended whenever possible. For mechanical systems, increase the percentage of outdoor air and total air flow supply to occupied spaces
- Ensure routine maintenance of HVAC systems according to industrial standards.

Education and training

- Communicate supportive workplace policies clearly, frequently, and multiple methods to promote a safe and healthy workplace. Communication should be in plain language.
- Make aware all the workers regarding basic fact about COVID 19
E.g. mode of transmission and preventive measure such as frequent hand hygiene, correct use of face masks, cough and sneeze etiquette, avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth, maintain physical distancing, good ventilation, vaccination etc.
- Post instructions and frequent reminders at entrance and strategic places on COVID 19 symptoms and preventive measures.

4. Routine screening of at-risk workers

- Implement a system to screen workers for suspected symptoms
- Conduct daily in-person or virtual health checks (symptoms and or temperature screening) of employees before they enter the work site.
- Screen workers with high exposure risk using point of care rapid antigen testing
- Advise workers not to report for duty if they develop symptoms consistence with COVID 19 and inform relevant authorities for further action.

If a suspected COVID-19 worker is found

- Isolate the worker in a designated room until transport to appropriate place is arranged.
- Inform relevant authorities including local health authorities for further action
- Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection of the related environment and the isolation room
- Co-workers who had high risk contact with known cases should be assessed and further actions to be taken.

References

- Preventing and mitigating COVID - 19 at work, World Health Organization, 19 May 2021
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention(CDC), July 27, 2021.

