

When an Employee Exhibits COVID-19 Symptoms at the Workplace

A COVID-19 resource developed by IREM® (Institute of Real Estate Management)

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As employers reopen their workplaces and their workers return to the office, they should have in place a plan that outlines what to do if an employee gets sick at work and for dealing with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases.

The following pages contain:

- Suggested actions to take when an employee exhibits COVID-19 symptoms at work
- CDC guidance on managing COVID-19 symptoms at home to share with employees who may become ill
- CDC guidance on cleaning and disinfecting your facility should someone exhibit symptoms at the workplace

When an Employee Exhibits COVID-19 Symptoms at the Workplace

Ask all employees to monitor their own health, and encourage anyone who exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 to stay home.

Ask an employee who calls in sick if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms (e.g. fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat).

Send home any employee who arrives at the office sick or becomes sick while at work, whether or not they have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

An employee who appears to have symptoms upon arrival at work or who becomes sick during the day should immediately be separated from others, preferably in a room or area that can be isolated behind a closed door, and asked to avoid touch people, surfaces, or objects. If not already using a face mask, the employee should be provided one. Assist the employee in making arrangements to return home, minimizing potential contact with others, and provide CDC guidance on managing COVID-19 symptoms at home.

CDC Guidance: 10 things you can do to manage your COVID-19 symptoms at home – to be given to employees who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms, included here on page 4

If an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19, notify coworkers of their possible exposure – but not the employee's identity.

Employers should notify potentially exposed employees that a coworker has been diagnosed with COVID-19. Employers also should be aware of any requirements to notify local or state health authorities and to follow their advice. Other employees may have been exposed to the virus if they were in close contact with the diagnosed coworker. The CDC advises that those with symptoms should self-isolate; and those with no symptoms should remain at home and practice social distancing for 14 days. Consider notifying clients, vendors, or other guests who may have been exposed to the diagnosed employee of the diagnosis. Also, be mindful that a confirmed case of COVID-19 may create anxiety among co-workers and be supportive and understanding of their concerns.

Protect the privacy of the diagnosed employee.

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires the confidentiality of employees' medical information, and employers may not disclose the identity of the employee diagnosed with COVID-19. Employers also must adhere to HIPAA guidelines and maintain the privacy of any health information they gather related to an employee's medical condition or their symptoms.

Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after anyone suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 has been in the workplace.

The CDC advises that areas visited by the ill person be closed off, that outside doors and windows be opened if possible, and that ventilating fans be used to increase air circulation in the area. Wait 24 hours or as long as practical before beginning the process of cleaning and disinfection. The cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment (like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and

ATM machines) used by the ill person, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces. If it has been seven or more days since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection beyond routine efforts is not necessary.

See CDC Guidance: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility – included here on pages 5-7

Do not permit the diagnosed employee to return to work until the individual is free of symptoms, has met the criteria to discontinue home isolation, and has been cleared by a health care provider and/or health department.

The CDC advises that it may be unrealistic in the current health climate to expect a formal return to work certification from a primary care doctor, but employers may rely upon a form from a local clinic or an email from such a facility to confirm the employee does not have the virus.

Stay informed.

With COVID-19, the environment is changing frequently. Be aware of most current CDC and OSHA guidelines and directives from local and state health agencies.

Useful Resources:

[CDC Guidelines: Businesses and Workplaces](#)

[CDC Guidelines: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility: Everyday Steps, Steps When Someone Is Sick, and Considerations for Employers](#)

[CDC Frequently Asked Questions: Suspected or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

[OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

[EEOC: Coronavirus and COVID 19](#)

10 things you can do to manage your COVID-19 symptoms at home

Accessible Version: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

If you have possible or confirmed COVID-19:

1. **Stay home** from work and school. And stay away from other public places. If you must go out, avoid using any kind of public transportation, ridesharing, or taxis.



2. **Monitor your symptoms** carefully. If your symptoms get worse, call your healthcare provider immediately.



3. **Get rest and stay hydrated.**



4. If you have a medical appointment, **call the healthcare provider** ahead of time and tell them that you have or may have COVID-19.



5. For medical emergencies, call 911 and **notify the dispatch personnel** that you have or may have COVID-19.



6. **Cover your cough and sneezes.**



7. **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



8. As much as possible, **stay** in a specific room and **away from other people** in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available. If you need to be around other people in or outside of the home, wear a facemask.



9. **Avoid sharing personal items** with other people in your household, like dishes, towels, and bedding.



10. **Clean all surfaces** that are touched often, like counters, tabletops, and doorknobs. Use household cleaning sprays or wipes according to the label instructions.



cdc.gov/coronavirus

Cleaning And Disinfecting Your Facility

Everyday Steps, Steps When Someone is Sick, and Considerations for Employers

How to clean and disinfect

Wear disposable gloves to clean and disinfect.

Clean

- **Clean surfaces using soap and water.** Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces.



High touch surfaces include:

Tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.



Disinfect

- Clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty. Then, use a household disinfectant.
- **Recommend use of EPA-registered household disinfectant.** **Follow the instructions on the label** to ensure safe and effective use of the product.

Many products recommend:

- Keeping surface wet for a period of time (see product label).
- Precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

- **Diluted household bleach solutions may also be used** if appropriate for the surface. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.

Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.

Leave solution on the surface for **at least 1 minute**

Bleach solutions will be **effective** for disinfection **up to 24 hours**.

To make a bleach solution, mix:

- 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water

OR

- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

- **Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol.**



Soft surfaces

For soft surfaces such as **carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes**

- **Clean the surface using soap and water** or with cleaners appropriate for use on these surfaces.



cdc.gov/coronavirus

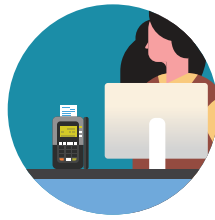
- **Launder items** (if possible) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.

OR

- **Disinfect with an EPA-registered household disinfectant.** [These disinfectants](#) meet EPA's criteria for use against COVID-19.

Electronics

- For electronics, such as **tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines**
- Consider putting a **wipeable** cover on electronics.
- **Follow manufacturer's instruction** for cleaning and disinfecting.
 - If no guidance, **use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol.** Dry surface thoroughly.



Laundry

For clothing, towels, linens and other items

- Launder items according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the **warmest appropriate water setting** and dry items completely.
- **Wear disposable gloves** when handling dirty laundry from a person who is sick.
- Dirty laundry from a person who is sick **can be washed with other people's items.**
- **Do not shake** dirty laundry.
- Clean and **disinfect clothes hampers** according to guidance above for surfaces.
- **Remove gloves**, and wash hands right away.



Cleaning and disinfecting your building or facility if someone is sick

- **Close off areas** used by the person who is sick.
- **Open outside doors and windows** to increase air circulation in the area. **Wait 24 hours** before you clean or disinfect. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- Clean and disinfect **all areas used by the person who is sick**, such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines.
- If **more than 7 days** since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.
 - Continue routine cleaning and disinfection.



When cleaning

- **Wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.**
 - Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) might be required based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used and whether there is a risk of splash.
 - Gloves and gowns should be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area.
- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for 20 seconds.
 - Always wash immediately after removing gloves and after contact with a person who is sick.



- Hand sanitizer: If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.

- **Additional key times to wash hands** include:

- After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After using the restroom.
- Before eating or preparing food.
- After contact with animals or pets.
- Before and after providing routine care for another person who needs assistance (e.g., a child).

Additional Considerations for Employers



- **Educate workers** performing cleaning, laundry, and trash pick-up to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19.
- Provide instructions **on what to do if they develop symptoms within 14 days** after their last possible exposure to the virus.
- Develop **policies for worker protection and provide training** to all cleaning staff on site prior to providing cleaning tasks.
 - Training should include when to use PPE, what PPE is necessary, how to properly don (put on), use, and doff (take off) PPE, and how to properly dispose of PPE.
- Ensure workers are **trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals** used in the workplace in accordance with OSHA's Hazard Communication standard ([29 CFR 1910.1200](#)).
- **Comply** with OSHA's standards on Bloodborne Pathogens ([29 CFR 1910.1030](#)), including proper disposal of regulated waste, and PPE ([29 CFR 1910.132](#)).

For facilities that house people overnight:

- Follow CDC's guidance for [colleges and universities](#). Work with state and local health officials to determine the best way to isolate people who are sick and if temporary housing is needed.
- For guidance on cleaning and disinfecting the bedroom/bathroom for someone who is sick, review CDC's guidance on [disinfecting your home if someone is sick](#).

