

INFECTION CONTROL PRECAUTIONS

Every year in the United States, at least 2.8 million people get an antibiotic-resistant infection. These types of maladies can include typical everyday illnesses like a head cold or ear or sinus infections, or illnesses that are much more serious (pneumonia, measles, tuberculosis, coronavirus, etc.). When a person works in an office environment, or works with other individuals directly, their risk of exposure to an infection increases heavily. The outcome of an infection can be severe, depending on the individual's immune system. To avoid anyone getting sick, it is up to everyone to try and keep the workplace safe from the possible spreading of germs and bacteria.



USE PROPER COUGH AND SNEEZE ETIQUETTE.

Whether you are considered "sick" or not, everyone should always follow proper cough and sneeze etiquette. To help stop the spread of germs:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put your used tissue in a wastebasket.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.

When an ill individual coughs, sneezes, or talks, droplets containing infectious agents are generated and could spread illness when it comes into contact with another person's eyes, nose, or mouth. Serious respiratory illnesses like influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), whooping cough, and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) can be spread when coughing and sneezing are not properly controlled.



IF YOU ARE SICK, STAY HOME!

If you show any symptoms of an acute respiratory illness (like a cough or shortness of breath), you should notify your supervisor and stay home until you are:

- **free** of a fever (anything greater than 100.4° F [37.8° C]),
- **free** from signs of a fever, and
- **free** from any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom altering medicines (for example, cough suppressants).

WASH YOUR HANDS.

To avoid both spreading and contracting an illness, you should clean your hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol or, preferably, wash your hands. Washing your hands is easy, and it's one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Follow these five steps every time.



1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.



2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.



3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds.



4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.



5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

If your hands are unclean, until they are washed, you should avoid touching your face or touching other objects that others may come into contact with.

ROUTINELY CLEAN YOUR ENVIRONMENT.

You should regularly clean all of your frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as:

workstations



countertops



doorknobs



Use the cleaning agents that are commonly used in these areas and follow the directions on the label. When at your home, the same rules should apply.

IF TRAVELING, TAKE PRECAUTIONS.

If you are planning on traveling outside of the country, you should check with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention prior to your trip for any travel bans or advisories.

- If you are displaying symptoms of an acute respiratory illness, you should not travel and stay at home.
- If you become sick while away for work-related business, you should contact your supervisor and call a healthcare professional as soon as possible.



Workplace Infection Prevention and Response Checklist

Instructions for use: The severity of any illness, or how many will fall ill in a specific location, is often unknown. Employers should have a response plan in place on how to keep business operations running should a large number of employees not be able to arrive to work due to an illness or an outbreak. There should also be a plan in place on how to keep the workplace disease-free prior to individuals getting ill. The following checklist can be used to help prepare and plan for a disease outbreak. Any “NO” answers may need to be revisited when creating or revising your plan.

Everyday Illness Preparation

1. *Is your attendance policy flexible enough to encourage sick employees to stay home?* Yes No

2. *Does your business have sick leave policies that have been communicated to all employees?* Yes No

3. *If an employee arrives to work and develops acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e., coughing, shortness of breath), do you separate them from other employees before sending them home?* Yes No

4. *Do you have any visible signage encouraging staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, hand hygiene, etc.?* Yes No

5. *Do you provide tissues and alcohol-based hand sanitizers for employee use?* Yes No

6. *Do you encourage employees to clean surfaces that they regularly touch (i.e., desktops, doorknobs, etc.)?* Yes No

7. *Do you provide disposable wipes to clean surfaces prior to each use?* Yes No

8. *Are there disaster relief supplies kept on-site (i.e., bottled water, toilet paper, paper towels, imperishable foods, etc.)?* Yes No



EMPLOYER CHECKLIST

Creating a Response Plan

9. *Have you identified possible work-related exposure and health risks to your employees?* Yes No
10. *Are your human resources policies involving sick leave consistent with federal and state workplace laws?* Yes No
11. *Do your human resources policies discourage the harassment of individuals from specific ethnic groups or backgrounds that could be associated with an illness?* Yes No
12. *Have you explored the possibility of “social distancing,” which includes distancing affected employees by creating policies and practices involving telecommuting and flexible work hours for individuals who are showing symptoms of illness?* Yes No
13. *Have you identified essential business functions, jobs, and roles that are REQUIRED to maintain daily business operations?* Yes No
14. *Have you created a contingency plan of who will take over essential functions should those individuals be unavailable?* Yes No
15. *Do you have a plan in place to minimize exposure between employees and the public if public health officials call for social distancing?* Yes No
16. *Is there a method in place on how to communicate your disease response plan to all employees?* Yes No
17. *Has the community where the business is located been contacted to learn about any plans in place involving a disease outbreak?* Yes No
18. *Does your disease response plan contain information on possible travel bans or instructions in the case of an individual’s illness or an outbreak?* Yes No

Additional Resources:

U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Guidance on Pandemic-Related Wage & Hour Issues:

>>> <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/flsa/pandemic>

U.S. DOL Guidance on Pandemic-Related Family & Medical Leave Issues:

>>> <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla/pandemic>

OSHA Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19:

>>> <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>