

Sukkur IBA University

Merit-Quality-Excellence

Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19

How COVID-19 spreads

When someone who has COVID-19 coughs or exhales they release droplets of infected fluid. Most of these droplets fall on nearby surfaces and objects, such as desks, tables or telephones. People could catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects, and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. If they are standing within 1 meter of a person with COVID-19 they can catch it by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them. In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to flu. Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age: people over 40 seem to be more vulnerable than those under 40. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness. This document gives advice on:

1. Simple ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your workplace
2. How to manage COVID-19 risks when organizing meetings and events.

Simple ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your workplace

The low-cost measures below will help prevent the spread of infections in your workplace, such as colds, flu and stomach bugs, and protect your employees, staff, and students. Employers should start doing these things now, even if COVID-19 has not arrived in the communities where they operate. These measures can reduce working days lost due to illness and stop or slow the spread of COVID-19 if it arrives at one of your workplaces.

Make sure your workplaces are clean and hygienic

- Surfaces (e.g. desks and tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards) need to be wiped with disinfectant regularly
- Why? Because contamination on surfaces touched by employees and staff is one of the main ways that COVID-19 spreads.

Promote regular and thorough hand-washing by employees, staff and students

- Put sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the workplace. Make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled
- Display posters promoting hand-washing – ask your local public health authority for these or consult

- Combine with other communication measures such as offering guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefings at meetings, and information on intranet sites to promote hand-washing
- Make sure that staff, employees, and students have access to places where they can wash their hands with soap and water
- Why? Because washing kills the virus on your hands and prevents the spread of COVID-19.

Promote good respiratory hygiene in the workplace

- Display posters promoting respiratory hygiene. Combine this with other communication measures such as guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefing at meetings, and information on the intranet, etc.
- Ensure that face masks¹ or paper tissues are available at your workplaces, for those who develop a runny nose or cough at work, along with closed bins for hygienically disposing of them
- Why? Because good respiratory hygiene prevents the spread of COVID-19.

How to manage COVID-19 risk when organizing meetings and events

Why do employers and organizers need to think about COVID-19?

Organizers of meetings and events need to think about the potential risk from COVID-19 because:

- There is a risk that people attending your meeting or event might unwittingly bring the COVID-19 virus to the meeting. Others might be unknowingly exposed to COVID-19.
- Although COVID-19 is a mild disease for most people, it can make some very ill. Around 1 in every 5 people who catch COVID-19 needs hospital treatment.

Key considerations to prevent or reduce COVID-19 risks

BEFORE the meeting or event

Check the advice from the authorities in the community where you plan to hold the meeting or event. Follow their advice.

Develop and agree a preparedness plan to prevent infection at your meeting or event.

- Consider whether a face-to-face meeting or event is needed. Could it be replaced by a teleconference or online event?
- Could the meeting or event be scaled down so that fewer people attend? – Verify information and communication channels in advance with key partners such as public health and health care authorities. Pre-order sufficient supplies and materials, including tissues and hand sanitizer for all participants. Have surgical masks available to offer anyone who develops respiratory symptoms.
- Actively monitor where COVID-19 is circulating. Advise participants in advance that if they have any symptoms or feel unwell, they should not attend.
- Make sure all organizers, participants, caterers, and visitors at the event provide contact details: mobile telephone number, email, and address where they are staying. State clearly that their details will be shared with local public health authorities if any participant becomes ill with a suspected infectious disease. Anyone who does not agree to this condition cannot attend the event or meeting.

Develop and agree a response plan in case someone at the meeting becomes ill with symptoms of COVID-19 (dry cough, fever, malaise). This plan should include at least:

- Identify a room or area where someone who is feeling unwell or has symptoms can be safely isolated
- Have a plan for how they can be safely transferred from there to a health facility.
- Know what to do if a meeting participant, staff member, or service provider tests positive for COVID-19 during or just after the meeting
- Agree the plan in advance with your partner health care provider or health department.