Frequently Asked Questions:

The responses below were gathered from a variety of resources around the web and industry.

What should I do if an employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19?

In most cases, you do not need to shut down your facility. But do close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the sick person:

- Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for other employees being exposed to respiratory droplets. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.

- During this waiting period, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in these areas.

Follow the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#):

- Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water before disinfecting them.

- To disinfect surfaces, use [products that meet EPA criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2](#), the virus that causes COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.

- Always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used when you are cleaning and disinfecting.

- You may need to wear additional personal protective equipment (PPE) depending on the setting and disinfectant product you are using.

In addition to cleaning and disinfecting, employers should determine   which employees may have been exposed to the virus and need to take additional precautions:

- Most workplaces should follow the [Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](#).

- Critical infrastructure workplaces should follow the guidance [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#).

Sick employees should follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees should not return to work until they have met the criteria to discontinue home isolation and have consulted with a healthcare provider and state or local health department.

If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

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

If employees have been exposed but are not showing symptoms, should I allow them to work?

Employees may have been exposed if they are a "close contact" of someone who is infected, which is defined as being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a person with COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time:

- Potentially exposed employees who **have** symptoms of COVID-19 should self-isolate and follow CDC recommended steps.

- Potentially exposed employees who **do not have** symptoms should remain at home or in a comparable setting and practice social distancing for 14 days.

All other employees should self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath. If they develop symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and stay home.

See Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure for more information.

To ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, CDC advises that Critical Infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain symptom-free and additional precautions are taken to protect them and the community.

- Critical infrastructure businesses have an obligation to limit, to the extent possible, the reintegration of in-person workers who have been exposed to COVID-19 but remain symptom-free in ways that best protect the health of the worker, their co-workers, and the general public.

- An analysis of core job tasks and workforce availability at worksites can allow the Employer to match core activities to other equally skilled and available in-person workers who have not been exposed.

- A critical infrastructure worker who is symptom-free and returns to work should wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days

after last exposure. Employers can issue facemasks or can approve employees' supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.

See [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#) for more information.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

What should I do if I find out several days later, after an employee worked, that they were diagnosed with COVID-19?

- If it has been **less than 7 days** since the sick employee used the facility, clean and disinfect all areas used by the sick employee following the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#).
- If it has been **7 days or more** since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces in the facility.
- Other employees may have been exposed to the virus if they were in "close contact" (within approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) of the sick employee for a prolonged period of time.
- Those who have symptoms should self-isolate and follow [CDC recommended steps](#).
- In most workplaces, those potentially exposed but with no symptoms should remain at home or in a comparable setting and practice social distancing for 14 days.
- Critical infrastructure workers should follow [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#). A critical infrastructure worker who is symptom-free and returns to work should wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure. Employers can issue facemasks or can approve employees' supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.
- Employees not considered exposed should self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath. If they develop symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and stay home.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

When should an employee suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 return to work?

Sick employees should follow [steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick](#). Employees should not return to work until they meet the criteria to [discontinue home](#)

[isolation](#) and have consulted with a healthcare provider and state or local health department.

Employers should not require sick employee to provide a negative COVID-19 test result or healthcare provider's note to return to work. Employees with COVID-19 who have stayed home can stop home isolation and return to work when they have met one of the following sets of criteria:

- Option 1: If, in consultation with a healthcare provider and local public health authorities knowledgeable about locally available testing resources, it is determined **an employee will not have a test** to determine if they are still contagious, the employee can leave home and return to work after these three conditions have been met:

  - The employee has had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is, 3 full days of no fever without the use medicine that reduces fevers)

  - Respiratory symptoms have improved (for example, cough or shortness of breath have improved)

  - At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared

- Option 2: If, in consultation with a healthcare provider and local public health authorities knowledgeable about locally available testing resources, it is determined **the employee will be tested** to determine if the employee is still contagious, the employee can leave home after these three conditions have been met:

  - The employee no longer has a fever (without the use of medicine that reduces fevers)

  - Respiratory symptoms have improved (for example, cough or shortness of breath have improved)

  - They received two negative tests in a row, at least 24 hours apart. Their doctor should follow [CDC guidelines](#).

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

What should I do if an employee has a respiratory illness?

Employees who appear to have COVID-19 symptoms, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, upon arrival to work or become sick during the day with COVID-19 symptoms should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home.

CDC has a [symptom self-checker](#) chatbot called Clara that employers and employees may find helpful. It has a series of questions and recommends what level of medical care, if any, the user should seek. It is not intended to provide diagnosis or treatment.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

What does "acute" respiratory illness mean?

"Acute" respiratory illness is an infection of the upper or lower respiratory tract that may interfere with normal breathing, such as COVID-19. "Acute" means of recent onset. A respiratory illness that is acute, that is, of recent onset (for example, for a few days), and is used to distinguish from chronic respiratory illnesses like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

<u>Reducing the Spread of COVID-19 in Workplaces</u>

How do I keep employees who interact with customers safe?

To keep your employees safe, you should:

- Consider options to increase physical space between employees and customers such as opening a drive- through, erecting partitions, and marking floors to guide spacing at least six feet apart.

- At least once a day [clean and disinfect](#) surfaces frequently touched by multiple people. This includes door handles, desks, phones, light switches, and faucets.

- Consider assigning a person to rotate throughout the workplace to clean and disinfect surfaces.

- Consider scheduling handwashing breaks so employees can wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

- Consider scheduling a relief person to give cashiers and service desk workers an opportunity to wash their hands.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

How can I help protect employees who may be at higher risk for severe illness?

Have conversations with employees if they express concerns. Some people may be at [higher risk of severe illness](#). This includes [older adults](#) (65 years and older) and people of any age with serious underlying medical conditions. By using strategies that

help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, you will help protect all employees, including those at higher risk. These strategies include:

- Implementing telework and other social distancing practices

- Actively encouraging employees to stay home when sick

- Promoting handwashing

- Providing supplies and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for cleaning and disinfecting workspaces

In workplaces where it's not possible to eliminate face-to-face contact (such as retail), consider assigning higher risk employees work tasks that allow them to maintain a 6-foot distance from others, if feasible.

Employers should not require employees to provide a note from their healthcare provider when they are sick and instead allow them to inform their supervisors or employee health services when they have conditions that put them at higher risk for diseases.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

Do employees need to wear cloth face coverings or personal protective equipment (PPE) (such as N95 respirators, gloves) to protect themselves while working?

CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, especially in areas of significant community transmission. Cloth face coverings may prevent people who don't know they have the virus from transmitting it to others. These face coverings are not surgical masks or respirators and are not appropriate substitutes for them in workplaces where masks or respirators are recommended or required.

Employees should continue to follow their routine policies and procedures for PPE (if any) that they would ordinarily use for their job tasks. When cleaning and disinfecting, employees should always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used. Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) may be needed based on setting and product.

CDC does not recommend the use of PPE in workplaces where it is not routinely recommended. Facilities can use the hierarchy of controls, such as administrative, and engineering controls – these strategies are even more effective at preventing exposures than wearing PPE.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

How often should employees wash their hands while at work?

CDC recommends employees protect themselves from respiratory illness with everyday preventive actions, including good hand hygiene. Employees should wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not readily available, especially during key times when persons are likely to be infected by or spread germs:

- After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing

- Before, during, and after preparing food

- After using the toilet

- After touching garbage

- Before and after the work shift

- Before and after work breaks

- After touching objects that have been handled by customers

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

What can I tell my employees about reducing the spread of COVID-19 at work?

Employees should take the following steps to protect themselves at work:

- Follow the policies and procedures of the Employer related to illness, cleaning and disinfecting, and work meetings and travel.

- Stay home if sick, except to get medical care.

- Maintain a distance of at least 6 ft. from all other persons.

- Understand that no one with symptoms should be present at the workplace. Employees should inform their supervisor if they or their colleagues develop symptoms at work, especially fever, cough, or shortness of breath.

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing noses, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.

   o Use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.

- To the extent possible, avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places – elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, handshaking with people, etc.

- Minimize handling cash, credit cards, and mobile or electronic devices when possible.

- Practice social distancing by keeping at least 6 feet away from fellow co-workers, customers, and visitors when possible.

- Avoid all non-essential travel.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

Should we be screening employees for COVID-19 symptoms (such as temperature checks)? What is the best way to do that?

Screening employees is an optional strategy that employers may use. There are several methods that employers can use to protect the employees conducting the temperature screening. The most protective methods incorporate social distancing (maintaining a distance of 6 feet from others), or physical barriers to eliminate or minimize the screener's exposures due to close contact with a person who has symptoms during screening. Examples to consider that incorporate these types of controls for temperature screening include:

- **Reliance on Social Distancing**: Ask employees to take their own temperature either before coming to the workplace or upon arrival at the workplace. Upon their arrival, stand at least 6 feet away from the employee and:

  - Ask the employee to confirm that their temperature is less than 100.4º F (38.0º C) and confirm that they are not experiencing coughing or shortness of breath.

  - Make a visual inspection of the employee for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks or fatigue.

  - Screening staff do not need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) if they can maintain a distance of 6 feet.

- **Reliance on Barrier/Partition Controls**: During screening, the screener stands behind a physical barrier, such as a glass or plastic window or partition, that can protect the screener's face and mucous membranes from respiratory droplets that may be produced when the employee sneezes, coughs, or talks. Upon arrival, the screener should wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or, if soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Then:

  - Make a visual inspection of the employee for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks or fatigue.

  - Conduct temperature and symptom screening using this protocol:

    - Put on disposable gloves.

- Check the employee's temperature, reaching around the partition or through the window. Make sure the screener's face stays behind the barrier at all times during the screening.

- **If performing a temperature check on multiple individuals, make sure that you use a clean pair of gloves for each employee and that the thermometer has been thoroughly cleaned in between each check.** If disposable or non-contact thermometers are used and you did not have physical contact with an individual, you do not need to change gloves before the next check. If non-contact thermometers are used, clean and disinfect them according to manufacturer's instructions and facility policies.

   o Remove and discard PPE (gloves), and wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

If social distance or barrier controls cannot be implemented during screening, PPE can be used when the screener is within 6 feet of an employee during screening. However, reliance on PPE alone is a less effective control and more difficult to implement given PPE shortages and training requirements.

- **Reliance on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**: Upon arrival, the screener should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, put on a facemask, eye protection (goggles or disposable face shield that fully covers the front and sides of the face), and a single pair of disposable gloves. A gown could be considered if extensive contact with an employee is anticipated. Then:

   o Make a visual inspection of the employee for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks or fatigue, and confirm that the employee is not experiencing coughing or shortness of breath.

   o Take the employee's temperature.

      - **If performing a temperature check on multiple individuals, make sure that you use a clean pair of gloves for each employee and that the thermometer has been thoroughly cleaned in between each check.** If disposable or non-contact thermometers are used and you did not have physical contact with an individual, you do not need to change gloves before the next check. If non-contact thermometers are used, you should clean and disinfect them according to manufacturer's instructions and facility policies.

- o After each screening, remove and discard PPE and wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

How do I handle personal protective equipment (PPE) waste?

Discard PPE into a trash can. There is no evidence to suggest that facility waste needs any additional disinfection.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

<u>**Healthy Business Operations:**</u>

What is social distancing and how can my workplace do that?

Social distancing means avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (at least 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible. Strategies that businesses could use include:

- Allowing flexible worksites (such as telework)

- Allowing flexible work hours (such as staggered shifts)

- Increasing physical space between employees at the worksite

- Increasing physical space between employees and customers (such as a drive-through and partitions)

- Implementing flexible meeting and travel options (such as postponing non-essential meetings or events)

- Downsizing operations

- Delivering services remotely (e.g., phone, video, or web)

- Delivering products through curbside pick-up or delivery

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

Should the employer require employees to provide a doctor's note or positive COVID-19 test result?

Employers should not require sick employees to provide a COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to

work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

Should employers cancel workplace meetings and conferences?

Carefully consider whether travel is necessary and use videoconferencing or teleconferencing when possible for work-related meetings and gatherings. Employers should consider canceling, adjusting, or postponing large work-related meetings or gatherings that can only occur in-person. Follow CDC guidance for events and mass gatherings.

When videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces, and space chairs at least 6 feet apart. Encourage staff and attendees to stay home if sick.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

Cleaning and Disinfection in the Workplace

How do I clean and disinfect machinery or equipment?

Current evidence, though still preliminary, suggests that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

If the machinery or equipment in question are not accessible to employees or have not been in contact with someone infected with COVID-19, they will not present an exposure hazard.

If machinery or equipment are thought to be contaminated and can be cleaned, follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations. First clean dirty surfaces with soap and water. Second, disinfect surfaces using products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2 and are appropriate for the surface.

If machinery or equipment are thought to be contaminated and **cannot** be cleaned, they can be isolated. Isolate papers or any soft (porous) surfaces for a minimum of 24 hours before handling. After 24 hours, remove soft materials from the area and clean the hard (non-porous) surfaces per the cleaning and disinfection recommendations. Isolate hard (non-porous) surfaces that cannot be cleaned and disinfected for a minimum of 7 days before handling.

How can I safely use cleaning chemicals?

Follow safe work practices when using cleaning chemicals.

- Always wear gloves appropriate for the chemicals being used when you are cleaning and disinfecting. Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) may be needed based on the setting and product you are using.

- Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleaner.

- Make sure that employees know which cleaning chemicals must be diluted and how to correctly dilute the cleaners they are using.

- Employers must 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).

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products for concentration, application method, and contact time.

In addition to cleaning and disinfecting, what can I do to decrease the spread of disease in the workplace?

Employers can also:

- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.

- Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. If hands are visibly dirty, soap and water should be chosen over hand sanitizer.

- Place hand sanitizer in multiple locations to encourage good hand hygiene practices.

- Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, the importance of hand hygiene, and coughing and sneezing etiquette at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where employees are likely to see them.

- Discourage handshaking.

Should employers adjust their ventilation system?

The risk of spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 through ventilation systems has not been studied but is likely low. Routine HVAC maintenance is recommended. Although it is never the first line of prevention, consider general ventilation adjustments in your workplace, such as increasing ventilation and increasing the amount of outdoor air used by the system. Maintain the indoor air temperature and humidity at comfortable levels for building occupants.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html

If the business shut down the facility as a result of a COVID-19 case or outbreak, what is the recommended way to clean and disinfect, and what is the appropriate timeframe to resume operations?

- Follow CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfection.

- Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.

- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.

- Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas including offices, bathrooms, and common areas, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.

- Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water prior to disinfection.

- Next, disinfect surfaces using products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and that are appropriate for the surface.

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products for concentration, application method, contact time, and required PPE.

Operations can resume as soon as the cleaning and disinfection are completed.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html