

# COVID-19 AND WORK

*Staying healthy and safe at work during the  
COVID-19 pandemic*



*Introduction*



Workplaces have played an important role in both the spread and mitigation of pandemic throughout the world.

Being provided a healthy and safe workplace throughout the pandemic and beyond is a human right.

Maintaining open, safe and healthy workplaces is of vital importance to protecting livelihoods, wellbeing and public health.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- explain what SARS-CoV-2 is (the virus which causes COVID-19), how it is transmitted at work and which workers are most likely to be affected;
- apply infection prevention and control (IPC) principles at your workplace;
- apply the hierarchy of control to COVID-19 at work;
- understand and contribute to worksite risk assessment for COVID-19 exposure;
- describe how to respond to an outbreak at your workplace;
- explain how to manage the health and safety of yourself and your workers throughout periods of worksite closures and teleworking; and
- explain how to safely return to the workplace.



- **This course is intended to guide:**
  - workers and their representatives
  - business leaders
  - employers and managers
  - health and safety professionals.
- **It focuses on:**
  - non-healthcare workplaces
  - small and medium sized enterprises.



**Module 1: Infection prevention and control (IPC) at the workplace**

**Module 2: Assessing risk of transmission at work**

**Module 3: Responding to workplace outbreaks**

**Module 4: Safer and healthier teleworking**

**Module 5: Preparing for worksite reopening**

- Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause a wide range of illnesses from the common cold to more severe diseases.
  - i.e., Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).
- A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.
- SARS-CoV-2 has been identified as the coronavirus strain responsible for causing COVID-19 disease.





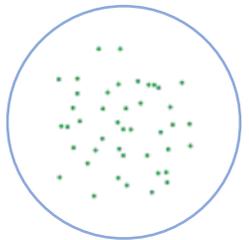
## Droplet

Respiratory droplets (from speaking, singing, coughing or sneezing) from an infected individual can reach the mouth, nose or eyes of a susceptible person and can result in infection when in close contact with an infected person.



## Contact

Droplets expelled by infected individuals can contaminate surfaces and objects. Having contact with those contaminated surfaces or objects followed by touching the mouth, nose or eyes can transmit the infection to the mucosal membranes of a susceptible individual.



## Airborne

Airborne transmission is the spread of an infectious organism by dissemination of aerosols that remain infectious when suspended in the air over long distances and time. This occurs during aerosol generating procedures in health care settings. This may also be possible in closed, crowded settings with poor ventilation, but this is not fully understood.

## COVID-19

### Coronavirus Symptoms

World Health Organization  
12 November 2020

**SERIOUS COVID-19 SYMPTOMS REQUIRING IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE**

- If you develop any of these symptoms, call your healthcare provider or health facility and seek medical care immediately.
- This is not an exhaustive list. These are the most common symptoms of serious illness, but you could get very sick with other symptoms – if you have any questions, call for help immediately.

 Shortness of breath/ Difficulty breathing	 Loss of speech or mobility or confusion	 Chest pain
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**MOST COMMON SYMPTOMS**

 Fever	 Cough	 Tiredness	 Loss of taste or smell
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**LESS COMMON SYMPTOMS**

 Sore throat	 Headache	 Aches and pains
 Diarrhea	 A rash on the skin or discolouration of fingers or toes	 Red or irritated eyes

**PLEASE NOTE:**

- If you live in an area where malaria, dengue or other infections are common and you have any of above symptoms, seek immediate medical care according to the local health authorities.
- Stay in touch with your primary care provider to ensure you continue to receive the routine care you need, such as medication refills, follow-ups and other routine consultations.

- Once a person has been exposed to the virus, they usually develop symptoms within 1 - 14 days.
  - Common symptoms include fever, cough, tiredness, loss of taste or smell.
  - Less common symptoms may include, sore throat, headache, aches and pains, diarrhea.
  
- Some people who have been infected may never develop symptoms. These people can still spread the virus to others.

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- Once a person has been exposed to the virus, they usually develop symptoms within 1 - 14 days.
  - The average time until a person develops symptoms after being exposed to the virus is 5 - 7 days.
  - Sometimes it can be up to 14 days before a person has symptoms. This is why it is recommended that people who are identified as exposed stay in quarantine for up to 14 days.
  - People can spread the virus and be contagious up to 3 days before they develop any symptoms. This is called “*pre-symptomatic transmission*.”
- Some people infected with the virus may never develop symptom; however, they can still spread the virus to others. This is called “*asymptomatic transmission*”.

Source: Clinical Management of COVID-19: interim guidance. 27 May 2020 World Health Organization <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/332196>.

- The risk of transmission of the COVID-19 virus in a workplace can be from exposure to droplets from an infected person and/or contact with contaminated surfaces.
- Crowded and inadequately ventilated workplaces are where the virus may spread by droplet or aerosol more efficiently.
- Droplets are primarily generated from an infected (source) person during coughing, sneezing and talking.
- Infected individuals may be able to transmit virus before they even know they are infectious. They may come to work before developing symptoms and infect others.

- Increased risk of transmission is found at workplaces with:
  - high density of people
  - close person-to-person contact
  - frequent contact with the public/clients
  - cold and dry work environments
  - indoors with poor ventilation
  - shared transportation, housing and dining facilities.
- Outbreaks of COVID-19 have been described in nearly every kind of workplace. Preventing transmission is important in all workplaces.