

2020

DISCOVERY HEALTH

EMPLOYER PREPAREDNESS PLAN
NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)
FOR MANAGERS

Overview

Employees who may have been exposed to the novel coronavirus strain and are considered at risk of infection should immediately inform their line managers. This is to enable the business to consider whether additional control measures might be needed such as requesting the employee to work from home, if possible, during the risk period. Employees are also entitled to sick leave if they have been declared not fit for work due to coronavirus infection.

What to do if there is suspected or confirmed Coronavirus infection within the team?

The novel coronavirus originating from Wuhan, China, is a highly transmissible disease. This means that the virus spreads very quickly and can therefore infect many people.

Since this novel coronavirus has only been recently identified, there is limited information regarding the mode/s of transmission, clinical features, and severity of disease at this stage. Human coronaviruses most commonly spread from an infected person to others through:

- The air by coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands
- Rarely, fecal contamination.

All employees must be encouraged to report any history and symptoms that indicate that they may have contracted a novel Coronavirus infection.

Steps to be taken by managers

- Request that the staff member to see their healthcare provider
- The staff member should be allowed to stay at home until they have been cleared by their healthcare provider and are no longer infectious. They can continue to work from home if not very sick but can also take leave if unable to work.
- Asymptomatic staff members can still come to work but should monitor symptoms closely. This includes all those who may have come into contact with the suspected coronavirus infected staff member. Symptoms may develop anytime between the first day of contact/ exposure to the infection and up to 14 days. If symptoms develop during this period, please follow guidance for symptomatic staff members.
- At the moment, there is no available vaccine or medication that is indicated during the asymptomatic period.
- Safety precautions will have to be reinforced to the rest of the team. These include the following:
 - Washing of hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - Avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
 - Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces **including the office space that may have been contaminated**
 - Avoiding close contact with the staff member with suspected coronavirus infection.

To staff members who may already be presenting with symptoms

- The manager must ask the staff member to seek medical care and work from home during the risk period.
- The staff member must share their previous travel history and recent contact history with a suspected or confirmed Coronavirus infected person with their healthcare provider; if already presenting with fever, cough and difficulty breathing
- Covering the mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue and throwing tissues away immediately and washing hands;
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces **including the office space that may have been contaminated.**
- Avoiding travel if already presenting with fever and cough, if they become sick while travelling, they should inform the crew and seek medical care early.
- If employees are not fit for work due to contracting coronavirus, they should follow the medical advice to remain at home for 14 days or get clearance from their treating healthcare providers before coming back to work.

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Important facts to remember

- Not all cases of fever, cough and shortness of breath are due to Coronavirus. Other causes could include influenza infection. Same precautionary measures as above should apply.

Guidance for Health and Safety Personnel

- Follow the standard triage protocols for ambulance services.
- Limit the number of persons present in the room/area or attending to the staff member.
- Avoid moving and transporting patients out of their room or area unless medically necessary.
- Use predetermined transport routes to minimize exposure for staff; and have the patient using a medical mask
- Maintain a record of all staff who came into contact with the patient.
- Inform building services after the staff member suspected or confirmed to have the coronavirus infection has been removed or left their workspace to come and disinfect the surfaces using water and detergent and applying commonly used hospital level disinfectants (such as sodium hypochlorite).
- Follow standard precautions for hand and respiratory hygiene and use of appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
 - Wear disposable gloves and a surgical mask if there is need to touch or move the staff member
 - Refrain from touching eyes, nose or mouth with potentially contaminated gloves or bare hands.
- Ensure the following respiratory hygiene measures are used:
 - Ensure that the patient covers their nose and mouth with a tissue or elbow when coughing or sneezing;
 - Offer a medical mask to the patient with suspected 2019-nCoV infection while they are in waiting/public areas.
 - Perform hand hygiene (washing hands with soap and water or cleaning with alcohol-based hand rubs) after contact with respiratory secretions.
- Disinfect all equipment used on the patient immediately after use (thermometer, BP machine etc.).

Travelling to countries with reported confirmed cases

- Based on the information currently available, the World Health Organization (WHO) advises that measures to limit the risk of exportation or importation of the disease should be implemented, without unnecessary restrictions of international traffic.
- No travel or trade restrictions with China have been recommended by WHO but the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) recommends avoiding nonessential travel to China.
- Precautionary measures as listed above should apply during travel.