



وزارة الصحة
Ministry of Health

**Public Awareness
Campaign
to Combat
Coronavirus
(COVID-19)**



Guidelines on SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Recommended Response for Workplaces

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FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions)

These general FAQs can guide employers on how to deal with suspected COVID-19 cases in the workplace:

1. What should one do when they suspect that an employee or an individual is presenting symptoms of “COVID-19”?

They should immediately call 444 and follow the instructions given to them

2. Should individuals evacuate the floor of a building that has a suspected “COVID-19” case?

There is no need for evacuation, but potentially affected areas should be disinfected according to Ministry of Health Disinfection of Public Places Guidelines

3. Should the whole building be evacuated if it is suspected that someone has “COVID-19” in the building?

No

4. Who is responsible to disinfect the floor or the building where a suspected “COVID-19” has been identified?

Responsibility for disinfecting a building, or part of a building, falls to the building's owner, landlord or building management company. However, individuals are their own first line of defense and common-sense hygiene protocols, e.g. washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and not touching the personal property or any items in the workspace of a suspected COVID-19 case, should be adhered to

5. In what instances should employers send employees home? If they are sent home, how long should they stay at home and when can they come back to work?

In the first instance, suspected cases of COVID-19 should be immediately reported to 444 who will provide clear information on next steps. The Public Health Directorate and relevant national authorities will determine each incident based on a specific risk assessment. In any event, no indirect contact of a positive COVID-19 case needs to evacuate or self-isolate. It is solely at the discretion of employers whether they wish to send home employees who are contacts of a direct contact of a positive COVID-19 patient until the results of direct contacts are received

6. How should employers respond if they discover one of the employees of the building is infected but learnt about it after working hours? Shall employers keep all employees at home for self-quarantine for 14 days?

This action will be taken by Public Health Directorate after assessing the situation and they will provide the employer with all the necessary details about each employee. It is recommended that daily cleaning of the surfaces should be done after working hours and there is no need for evacuation

General Recommendation Guidelines for the Workplace

1. Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:

- Do not make determinations of risk based on race, nationality or religion. Employers should maintain the confidentiality of employees that are confirmed to be infected with COVID-19
- Do not base the need for an unwell employee to attend work on their current or projected workload. Forcing an unwell employee to come to work, and allowing their illness to spread, will do far greater harm to your business in the medium- to long-term than allowing an unwell employee the necessary time to recover
- Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to self-isolate at home until they are free of fever (100.4°F [37.8°C] or greater using an oral thermometer), or any other symptom for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants)
- Employees should notify their employer and stay home under self-isolation conditions if they are sick
- Employers should ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with Public Health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies
- Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home

2. Separate Sick employees

- Employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day, with history of travel to a country currently affected by the COVID-19 outbreak (as stipulated by the guidelines uploaded by the National Taskforce to Combat Coronavirus (COVID-19), should be separated from other employees and placed in a well-ventilated room that is not frequented by their colleagues. In deciding what room to use to isolate an unwell employee, employers should consider the potential future exposure of other employees. For example, a manager's office may be a more logical option in which to isolate an employee than the staff break room or prayer room. 444 should be contacted immediately and instructions followed. Any room used to isolate sick employees should be disinfected following Ministry of Health Disinfection of Public Places Guidelines

3. Staff Education on Respiratory Etiquette

- Post clear information that encourages staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen
- Provide tissues and touchless disposal receptacles for use by employees
- Instruct employees to frequently wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or alternatively use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol. Soap and water should be used if hands are visibly dirty
- Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand sanitizers in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand sanitizers in multiple locations and in sufficient quantities

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

- 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 (minimum daily)
- Put alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers in prominent places around the workplace. Make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled
- Display posters promoting hand-washing and respiratory hygiene
- Offer guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefings at meetings and information on the intranet to promote hand-washing
- Make sure that staff, contractors and customers have access to places where they can wash their hands with soap and water
- Ensure that face masks and / 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. The face mask should be worn, properly, as soon as symptoms become apparent, and before the employee leaves their workstation to go to an isolation room or exit the building
- Brief your employees, contractors and customers that if COVID-19 starts spreading in your community anyone with even a mild cough or low-grade fever (37.3°C or more) needs to stay at home
- Make clear to employees that this absence will be treated as paid sick leave

Response strategies when identifying a suspected case in the workplace

Employers who suspect their employees of having COVID-19 should follow the below recommendations:

1. General Recommendations

- Contact 444 to evaluate the situation, assess the risk of exposure and decide whether this employee is a suspected case that fit case definition criteria. Follow instructions given by 444
- Escort this employee to a separate, isolated, well-ventilated room (employers need to dedicate a special place for isolation which is not typically frequented by staff. This may be, for example, a management office, rather than a rest room, a prayer room, etc)
- Ensure that other staff do not touch the belongings of the unwell employee and that any personal items of the unwell staff member are safely removed from the vicinity of other staff. It is very important that in the event that other staff touched the belongings of the unwell person that they thoroughly wash their hands
- Ensure that other staff are calm and assure them that they are safe
- Inform the other staff that proper measure will be taken in identifying other employees' exposure and contact in case the suspected employee proves to be positive for COVID-19
- Ensure that the suspected workplace of the employee is properly disinfected and sanitized, according to the Ministry of Health Disinfection of Public Places Guidelines

2. Advisory for employers

- If an employer is aware that someone at the workplace is a suspect case, the employer should remind staff to:
 - Adopt good personal hygiene; and
 - Inform their supervisors or the HR department immediately. They should stay at home on sick leave even if they feel that their symptoms are mild or they are not yet displaying symptoms
- If someone at the workplace is a confirmed case, the Ministry of Health's contact tracing officers will engage the employer to identify any persons at the workplace, including business associates, who may have had close contacts with the confirmed case. Employers should cooperate with the contact tracing officers and provide them with the necessary assistance and support. The Ministry of Health contact tracing officers will identify individuals who should be placed on quarantine
- Public Health encourages employers to provide timely information to employees on latest developments and reassure employees and other relevant persons, e.g. customers, of the measures being taken to ensure their well-being at the workplace