



COVID-19 Safe Workplace Guidance

COVID-19 FAQ

Q1: What's the best way to stay healthy and keep our coworkers healthy?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, people can take everyday preventive actions to avoid getting sick, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing nose, coughing or sneezing.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

Q2: Can someone who has had COVID-19 spread the illness to others?

Someone who has been released from isolation is not considered to pose a risk of infection to others, however, a person who is actively sick with COVID-19 can spread the illness to others. That is why the CDC recommends that these patients be isolated either in the hospital or at home (depending on how sick they are) until they are better and no longer pose a risk of infecting others.

How long someone is actively sick can vary, so the decision on when to release someone from isolation is made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with doctors, infection prevention and control experts, and public health officials and involves considering specifics of each situation including disease severity, illness signs and symptoms, and results of laboratory testing for that patient.

Q3: What are the symptoms and complications COVID-19 can cause?

Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death for confirmed COVID-19 cases. The following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

This list may not include all symptoms associated with the virus. Please see the [CDC website](#) for more information.

Q4: Can a person test negative and later test positive for COVID-19?

Using the CDC-developed diagnostic test, a negative result means that the virus that causes COVID-19 was not found in the person's sample. In the early stages of infection, it is possible the virus will not be detected. For COVID-19, a negative test result for a sample collected while a person has symptoms likely means that the COVID-19 virus is not causing their current illness.

Q5: Why Is Social Distancing important?

Social distancing measures are meant to stop and slow the spread of infectious diseases by restricting the level of interaction between people both sick and healthy. Diseases such as COVID-19 spread exponentially, which means that the number of infected people double in a given period. This is different than how people normally think of growth (linear). For example:

Linear (Normal) Growth: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, etc.

Exponential Growth: 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512, 1024, etc.

Here's an image that can help you visualize how social distancing helps keep people safe...



Q6: Why does hand hygiene matter so much?

When people cough and sneeze, millions of small droplets are released into the surrounding area. If people are sick, these droplets will contain huge amounts of the virus. If these droplets reach surfaces that you touch, your hands become contaminated and you are at an increased

risk of being infected. Frequently washing your hands or using alcohol-based sanitizer plays a vital role in keeping you and others healthy.

Virus Viability

For COVID-19, a negative test result for a sample collected while a person has symptoms likely means that the COVID-19 virus is not causing their current illness.

There are three ways SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing COVID-19, may be transmitted:

1. **In droplet form, via air.** The COVID-19 virus is airborne for a few seconds after someone sneezes or coughs. It's able to travel only a short distance before gravitational forces pull it down. Droplets are heavy enough that they don't travel very far and instead fall from the air after traveling only a few feet. Someone close enough for the virus particles to reach in that brief period can therefore be infected. This is the primary source of exposure.
2. **Droplets that fall onto a surface** can infect someone that comes into contact with that surface. The new coronavirus can survive on surfaces for several hours; hence the importance of using gloves and hand-washing after touching a surface in a public place. There is little evidence that surface contamination is a significant route of exposure.
3. **As an aerosol in air.** Evidence suggests that the new coronavirus can exist as an aerosol (liquid or solid suspended in a gas), only under very limited conditions. This transmission route is not contributing to the pandemic.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) maintains that person-to-person contact is the main method of transmission. 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.

Aerosols are particles held in the air by physical and chemical forces, e.g. Fog. The suspended particles may remain in the air for hours, depending on factors such as heat and humidity. If the virus is in droplets of mucus or saliva, they could be suspended in air and anyone passing through that aerosol cloud could become infected. This is highly improbable.

Studies of Viability on Surfaces

- Preliminary study in the *Journal of Hospital Infection* shows COVID-19 can live up to nine days.
- COVID-19 is viable in aerosols for three hours. Aerosolized virus showed a median half-life of about 1.1-1.2 hours. Study conducted inside closed drum.
- Most studies suggest that COVID-19 can remain viable:
 - In the air for up to three hours

- On copper for up to four hours
- On cardboard up to 72 hours
- On plastic and stainless steel up to three days

Viability of COVID-19 Out of Doors

There are no studies related to out of doors high touch surfaces, such as gas pump handles or keypads. While studies done for surface contamination are available, we should consider that weather, including wind and precipitation would remove the COVID-19 virus from surfaces quickly. There is further evidence that ultraviolet light from the sun degrades viruses in general.

Based on these assumptions, the virus will not last outside as long as indoors.

Recommendations include treating outdoor surfaces similarly to indoor surfaces. Since we don't have janitorial services on outdoor surfaces, it is suggested to wear disposable gloves conducting tasks where touch is required and dispose of after the task is complete.