

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) and Port Health Services and Border Control

The 2019 novel coronavirus or SARS-CoV-2 is a new respiratory virus that has not been identified before; and thus people have no immunity to it. The virus causes diseases of varying severities ranging from mild (e.g. similar to common cold) to severe (e.g. pneumonia).

TRANSMISSION



- ▶▶ Person-to-person **contact** or touching contaminated surfaces
- ▶▶ Likely spread via respiratory **droplets** within a distance of two meters (1-2m) through coughing and sneezing
- ▶▶ Estimated incubation period is between 2-14 days

Common sequence to acquiring COVID – 19

Source – You must be in direct contact with an infected individual or contaminated material

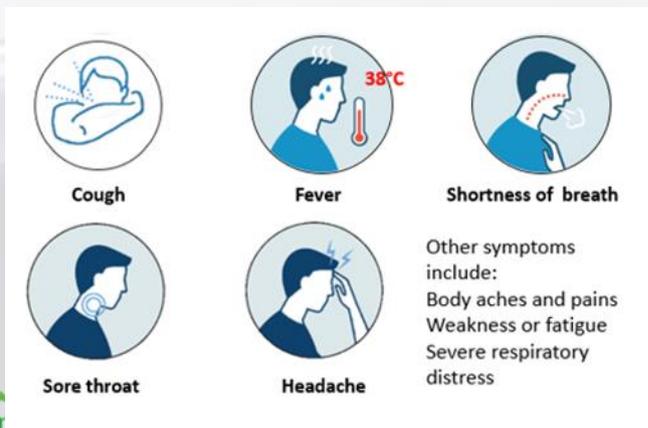
Inoculation – There must be an inoculation process from the source to the recipient e.g. touching your face with contaminated hand

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL SOURCES

Employers should:

- Have a workplace policy and procedure and ensure workers are familiar with it.
- The policy should include medical management procedures to address COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Communicate and make available a platform for workers to access the latest policy and relevant information around COVID-19. This should include an updated list of affected countries.
- Identify exposure risks for different categories of workers and implement appropriate control measures.
- Determine if workers could be exposed to virus during activities or contact with materials.
- Review HR policies around business travel, sick leave, and other related policies to account for COVID-19.

COMMON SYMPTOMS



W-O-R-K-E-R-S RESPONSIBILITIES

Wash hands regularly using soap and water (~20 sec) or alcohol-based hand rub (~70%)

Obey health and safety policies and procedures

Remember to cover nose & mouth with a flexed elbow/ tissue when coughing & sneezing

Key is to avoid exposure and also refrain from exposing others to potential risks

Ensure you don, doff and dispose of personal protective equipment properly

Report any situation likely to present a potential or serious danger to life or health

Self-monitor for signs of illness and self-isolate or report illness to managers, if it occurs



The risk to port health and border control staff at the primary line and biosecurity inspection areas is considered low.

Based on job specific risk assessments, consider the following:

- Office based workers
 - Administration and clerical – where sharing of equipment is unlikely
 - Communal space sharing – where sharing of equipment is likely e.g. computers, desks, telephones, headsets etc.
- Workers in direct contact with potential source of infection e.g. passport handling, customs officials, goods control officials, etc.



Office based workers should:

- ✍ Rearrange work stations to promote 1m spacing as far as reasonably practicable.
- ✍ Ensure adequate ventilation and sunlight into offices so that droplets can dry out quickly.
- ✍ Create awareness on good hand hygiene (hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and or the use of hand sanitizer with at least 70% alcohol).
- ✍ Promote good respiratory hygiene (elbow coughing and sneezing).
- ✍ Avoid touching your face, especially while working.
 - ✍ Limiting personal contact, by maintaining a minimum 1m space social distancing where reasonably possible.
- ✍ Perform frequent cleaning and disinfection of touched surfaces (e.g. headsets, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, remote controls, desks, keyboards, etc.).

Vaccinations

There is currently no vaccines for COVID-19 however, it is advisable to take the flu vaccine to prevent influenza and unnecessary testing for COVID-19

What to do if you suspect you have been exposed to COVID-19

- ▶ Alert your supervisor and occupational health clinic immediately.
- ▶ If you are experiencing symptoms, inform your health care provider about any contacts and recent travel to areas affected by COVID-19.

Workers in direct contact should:

- ✍ Have knowledge of the latest risk countries and the associated level of risk.
- ✍ Have knowledge of the origin of the travellers entering and goods that are being received.
- ✍ Practise and promote frequent handwashing throughout the shift. When hand washing facilities are not readily available, alcohol-based hand sanitizer is required.
- ✍ Where possible, stay 1 metre or more away from travellers.
- ✍ Promote good respiratory hygiene (elbow coughing and sneezing).
- ✍ Perform frequent cleaning and disinfection of touched surfaces (e.g. desks, keyboards, scanning apparatus, doorknobs, countertops, remote controls etc.).
- ✍ Avoid touching your face especially while working.
- ✍ Consider using PPE if in close contact with an ill traveller (e.g. interviews conducted in a confined or poorly ventilated space) or opening unknown packages suspicious for COVID-19. As a guide consider the following based on a risk assessment:
 - A single pair of disposable patient examination gloves.
 - Change gloves if they become torn,
 - Respiratory protection (i.e. N-95 respirator) and
 - Eye protection (i.e., goggles or disposable face shield that fully covers the front and sides of the face).
- ✍ The ill traveller should be provided with a surgical mask.
- ✍ Used PPE should be considered contaminated and discarded in accordance with safe practice.

For more information, contact NICD:
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www.nicd.ac.za or www.nioh.ac.za

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