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Preparing the Workplace for Coronavirus

HIGH RISK TRANSMISSION AREAS IN THE WORKPLACE AND HOW TO MITIGATE THE RISK

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So your worker has completed 14 days of isolation and their health care worker has written a letter saying they can return to work....

Even if they've recovered from COVID-19, they need to be aware of the risk

Here's why:

1. Re-infection may be a possibility
2. Number of cases in SA are rising exponentially
3. A high number of bacteria and viruses are transmitted in the workplace
4. Still at risk of transporting the virus back home and into the community

Before we discuss the workplace and high-risk areas

From sessions held on comorbidities and vulnerable
workers

Important to note: If an employee's job can be accomplished at home, or another low risk area then they should be afforded the opportunity to work from that area to decrease their risk of exposure

What should be in place already?

- Workplace preparedness plan
- COVID compliance officer
- Health risk assessment
 - Including knowing vulnerable workers, controls/ engineering, Policies/SOPs and PPE
- Isolation rooms for vulnerable workers
- Screening on entry into the workplace – temperature/ symptoms checklist
 - Tools and apps available

Which are the high-risk transmission areas?

1. Tearoom
2. Shared spaces
3. Shared equipment/ highly used surfaces
4. Bathrooms
5. Personal office space
6. Public transportation

Wise to do a health risk assessment – as high-risk areas will be workplace specific

Available on the NIOH website: <https://www.nioh.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Training-HRA-WHC-10-Jul-2020.pdf>

How long does the virus last on surfaces?

- WHO released a statement saying that “Studies have shown that the COVID-19 virus can survive for up to 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel, less than 4 hours on copper and less than 24 hours on cardboard.”

NB - temperature and humidity specific

An image from the New England Journal of Medicine

SURFACE		LIFESPAN OF COVID-19 VIRUS
	Paper and tissue paper**	3 hours
	Copper*	4 hours
	Cardboard*	24 hours ■
	Wood**	2 days ■■
	Cloth**	2 days ■■
	Stainless steel*	2–3 days ■■■
	Polypropylene plastic*	3 days ■■■
	Glass**	4 days ■■■■
	Paper money**	4 days ■■■■
	Outside of surgical mask**	7 days ■■■■■■

*At 69.8 to 73.4°F (21 to 23 °C) and 40% relative humidity **At 71°F and 65% relative humidity

Source: New England Journal of Medicine*; The Lancet Microbe**

BUSINESS INSIDER

What Can be Done to Lower the Risk?

- As mentioned before; if an employee can work from home they should be allowed to do so
- Screening before entering the workplace should be done – temperature and symptom checklist
 - Please make sure that whoever is in charge of screening is aware of the normal and abnormal values and that each person entering is checked properly
 - Various screening tools and apps available
- Sanitising stations should be used in as many areas as possible – especially entry/ exit points and high traffic areas such as the tearoom, corridors, outside lifts

What Can be Done to Lower the Risk?

- In a workplace – if possible, PPE should be supplied to employees as dictated by the health risk assessment
- Training should be done for all employees
- Posters should be used around the office or friendly reminders sent via email/text
- Cleaning of highly used surfaces/ equipment needs to be done almost all the time
- Provide bins for the correct disposal of waste and medical waste

What Can be Done to Lower the Risk?

- Well ventilated rooms must be utilised with open windows/ good airflow
- Avoid groupwork (unless can be done online)
- Avoid sharing of documents/ stationery
- Avoid overcrowded rooms/ meetings
- Staggering/ flexible shifts and break times
- High-risk employees should be provided with their own offices/ areas
- Isolation room/area for acutely unwell employees

What Can be Done to Lower the Risk?

Adopt the concept of 'The New Normal'

The public health interventions put in place are vital to preventing the spread of the virus and are as follows:

- Physical distancing by at least 1.5m
- Wear a mask in all public areas/ corridors
- Wash hands often for at least 20 seconds with soap and water
- Use a >60% alcohol based hand sanitiser
- Practise good cough/ sneeze etiquette
- Avoid touching your face
- Stay at home whenever feeling unwell

LOWEST RISK



HOME ALONE OR WITH HOUSEMATES

- Stay home as much as possible.
- Try to allow only people you live with into your home.
- Wash your hands.
- If you're sick, stay home and isolate from housemates.

MODERATE RISK



OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

- Wash your hands and don't touch your face.
- Stay at least 6 feet from people you don't live with.
- Wear a mask.
- Avoid shared surfaces, like swings or benches.

HIGHER RISK



OUTDOOR GATHERINGS

- Wash your hands and don't touch your face.
- Stay at least 6 feet from people you don't live with.
- Wear a mask.
- Don't share food, toys, and other items, and avoid shared surfaces.
- Participate in events like these infrequently.

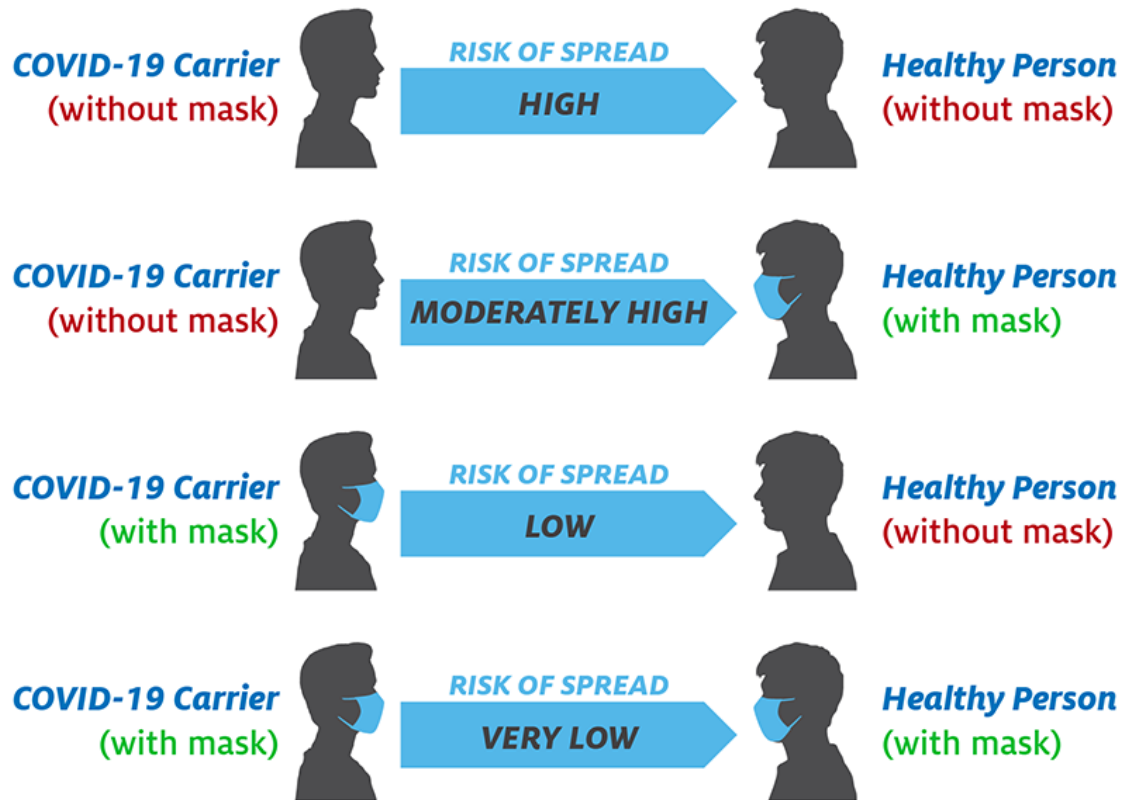
HIGHEST RISK



INDOOR GATHERINGS

- Wash your hands and don't touch your face.
- Stay at least 6 feet from people you don't live with.
- Wear a mask.
- Don't share food, toys, and other items, and avoid shared surfaces.
- Open windows for better ventilation.
- Try to avoid gathering indoors as much as possible.

WEAR A MASK TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS



- Implication
- Post COVID-19 infection - surgical mask is important for at least 21 days post initial test as per the DOEL
- All other workers to wear mask appropriate for their work area

Last note

- According to NICD and other sources – there has been **no recorded case of a person shedding infectious virus after 14 days**
- Therefore, there is no reason why a person should be treated any differently after returning to the workplace post isolation
- If an employee is returning to work post COVID illness – they must still monitor themselves daily. If any symptoms arise, they would need to isolate again and inform their doctor
- **It's important to keep up-to-date with the latest news surrounding COVID-19 so keep watching and attending our training webinars**

**MORE
KNOWLEDGE
= LESS FEAR**

Be **KIND** to address fear during
#coronavirus



Show empathy with those
affected



Learn about the disease to
assess the risks



Adopt practical measures to
stay safe

Learn more to Be **READY** for #COVID19:
www.who.int/COVID-19



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Acknowledgments

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