

This information sheet provides information applicable to the general workplace with regards to COVID-19. Employers must implement preventative measures at workplaces to ensure a safe and healthy work environment for employees. The requirements specified in regulations and directives issued under the Disaster Management Act were considered, including the consolidated directions on occupational health and safety measures at workplaces.



**WORKERS' RISK, RIGHTS,
ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES**

**SYMPTOMS FOR A SUSPECTED COVID-19 CASE
(WITH OR WITHOUT OTHER SYMPTOMS; NICD CASE DEFINITION 18
MAY 2020)**



COUGH



SHORTNESS OF BREATH



SORE THROAT



LOSS OF SENSE OF SMELL



DISTORTION OF SENSE OF TASTE

TRANSMISSION

- ▶ Person-to-person **contact** or touching contaminated surfaces
- ▶ Likely spread via respiratory **droplets** within a distance of two meters (2m) through coughing and sneezing

VULNERABLE WORKERS

Although any person may be at risk of contracting COVID-19, certain groups of people are at higher risk of developing serious complications and severe illness if infected with the virus. The categories of these vulnerable workers include:

- **Employees aged 60 years and older**
- **Employees of any age with one or more of the following chronic conditions** (especially if the condition is not well controlled):
 - **Chronic lung disease**
 - **Diabetes**
 - **Moderate / severe hypertension**
 - **Serious heart conditions**
 - **Chronic kidney disease** (being treated with dialysis)
 - **Chronic liver disease** (including cirrhosis)
- **Employees with severe obesity** (body mass index ≥ 40)
- **Employees that are immunocompromised**
- **Employees that are >28 weeks pregnant** (especially in combination with any of the above conditions).

**IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL
SOURCES**

Employers should conduct a risk assessment at the workplace:

- Identify work tasks or areas where transmission can occur
- Identify vulnerable workers,
- Assess the risk for each task or area, considering the route of exposure and viral load
- Identify suitable control measures, including the need for PPE, for each task or area according to the risk rating
- Consider additional hazards introduced in response to COVID-19
- Review the risk assessment when any changes to work processes occur, or following a confirmed case of COVID-19 at the workplace.

**DO YOU SUSPECT YOU HAVE BEEN
EXPOSED TO COVID-19.**

- ▶ Alert your supervisor or occupational health clinic immediately.
- ▶ If you are experiencing symptoms, inform your healthcare provider about recent travel or possible contact with persons diagnosed with COVID-19.

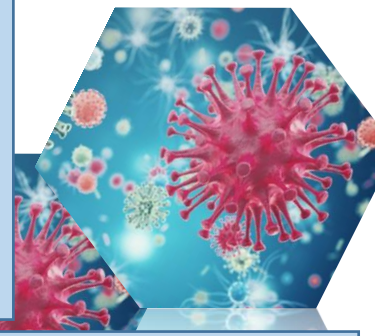
HOW IS COVID -19 DIAGNOSED?

If your healthcare provider suspects you may have COVID-19, then a laboratory test would be required. The NICD's webpage (www.nicd.ac.za) provides detailed information and guidelines with regards to the current case definition for a person under investigation (PUI), and the process to get tested. Tests can be performed at public or private laboratories, including NHLS mobile facilities.

COVID-19 toll free public number: 0800 029 999

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

W	ash hands regularly using soap and water (~20 sec) or alcohol-based hand rub (~70%)
O	bey health and safety policies and procedures
R	emember to cover nose & mouth with a flexed elbow/ tissue when coughing & sneezing
K	ey is to avoid exposure and also refrain from exposing others to potential risks
E	nsure you don, doff and dispose of personal protective equipment as prescribed
R	eport any situation likely to present a potential or serious danger to life or health
S	elf-monitor for signs of illness and self-isolate or report illness to managers, if it occurs



Prevention & control of workplace exposure to COVID-19

Administrative Measures

- ▶ Every employer must develop a plan for re-opening, outlining measures for phased return of employees
- ▶ Employer must undertake a risk assessment taking into account the specific circumstances of the workplace
- ▶ Provide employees with information and training on the applicable legislation and regulations, as well as the measures implemented to adhere to these
- ▶ Employees should take sick leave and stay at home when sick or displaying symptoms associated with COVID-19
- ▶ A manager must be appointed to address employee concerns and ensure that they are kept informed
- ▶ Minimize number of employees at the workplace through e.g. shift regimes, rotation, remote working arrangements
- ▶ Minimize contact between employees, and between employees and the public
- ▶ The employer must inform the Department of Health and the Department of Employment and Labour of every diagnosed case of COVID-19 amongst employees
- ▶ Investigate the cause of each diagnosed case, determine possible failure of control measures, and review the risk assessment
- ▶ Assist Dept. of Health with contact tracing where applicable.

Social Distancing Measures

- ▶ Arrange the workplace to maintain at least one and a half meters between workers at all times where possible
- ▶ If not possible, place physical barriers between or on workstations
- ▶ Where needed, supply employees with the appropriate PPE
- ▶ Implement staggered break times where possible to avoid crowding in common areas, e.g. canteens

WORKERS RIGHTS

Workers' rights include that employers and managers:

- Ensure that all preventive and protective measures are taken to minimize risks, including provision of adequate PPE supplies
- Provide continuous awareness, education and training to workers on anticipated occupational exposure to COVID-19
- Create a culture whereby workers can report freely without being stigmatised
- Advise and encourage workers on self-assessment, symptom reporting and staying home when ill
- Allow workers to exercise the right to withdraw from work activities, that they have reasonable justification to believe presents a serious danger to their life or health
- Report work-related illness to the compensation commissioner

Health and Safety Measures

- ▶ Every employee must be screened for observable symptoms associated with COVID-19 on arrival at the workplace
- ▶ Employees must self-report any additional symptoms on arrival, or if they start experiencing symptoms while at work
- ▶ Isolate workers that present with symptoms, provide them with surgical masks, and arrange for safe transport to home or a health care facility, as required
- ▶ Supply hand-sanitizer (containing 70% alcohol) for use by all employees at all work areas
- ▶ Work surfaces and equipment, and common use areas must be disinfected before, regularly during, and after work
- ▶ Ensure adequate hand wash facilities, with paper towels
- ▶ Employees must wear the required, provided PPE as identified by the risk assessment
- ▶ Employer must supply every employee with at least two cloth masks; Every person must wear a cloth mask when in a public place, including customers or visitors at a workplace
- ▶ Every workplace must be well ventilated by natural or mechanical means

REFERENCES

1. Department of Health, Republic of South Africa. COVID-19 online resource and news portal. <https://sacoronavirus.gov.za>
2. South African Government. Disaster Management Act: Consolidated COVID-19 Direction on health and safety in the workplace. <https://www.gov.za/documents/disaster-management-act-direction-minister-employment-and-labour-terms-regulation-4-10>
3. World Health Organisation. Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) technical guidance: Guidance for schools, workplaces and institutions. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/guidance-for-schools-workplaces-institutions>
4. Centers for Disease Control and prevention. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Businesses and Workplaces. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>



**COVID-19 Workplace Preparedness & Prevention
HEALTHY, SAFE & SUSTAINABLE WORKPLACES**

Workplace Hotline: 0800 2121 75
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No data charges apply for users of these mobile network providers. All content and resources on this website can be browsed and downloaded for free, excluding YouTube viewing and downloading.



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