



NATIONAL HEALTH
LABORATORY SERVICE

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

WITS School of
Public Health



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Division of the National Health Laboratory Service

ADDITIONAL WORKPLACE CONSIDERATIONS DURING THE TIME OF COVID-19



DATE: 27 May 2021 1030-12:30

Occupational Health and Safety,
Workplace Systems and COVID-19

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Outline

- Regulatory Frameworks
- Occupational Health and Safety Act
- COVID-19 Health Promotion
- Initiating a COVID-19 Control Programme
- COVID-19 Prevention Strategies
- COVID-19 related Common and Statutory law principles

Regulatory Frameworks

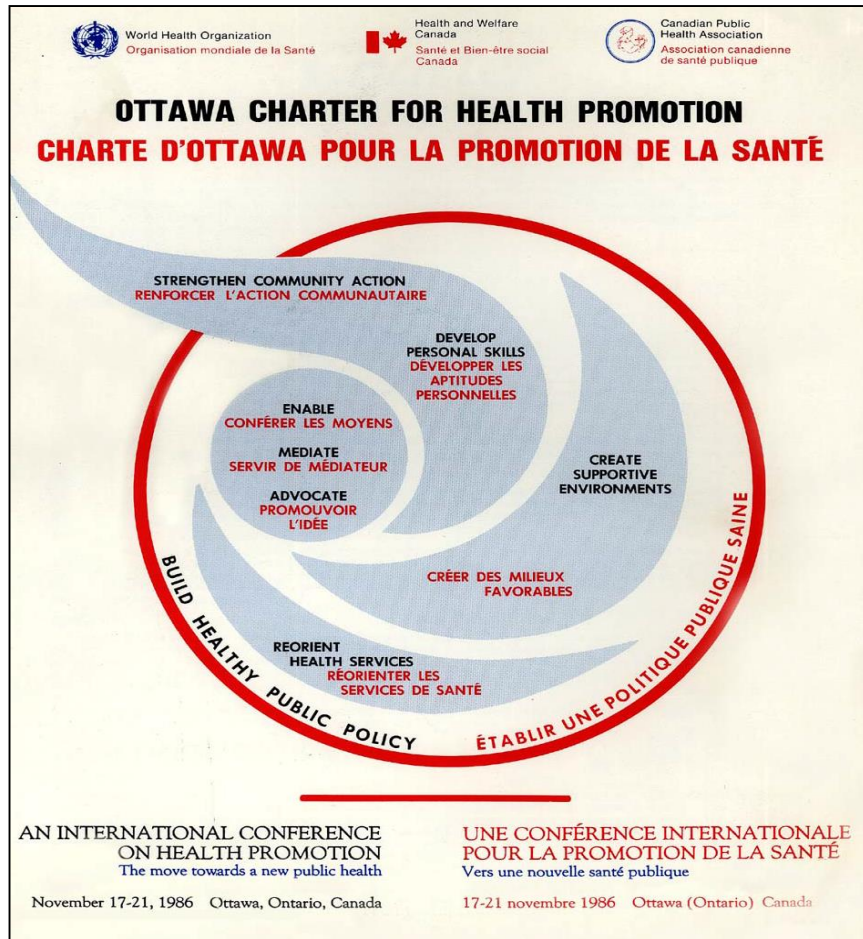
- COGTA Disaster Management Act No 57 of 2002
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993
 - Regulations for Hazardous Biological Agents of the OHS Act
- Department of Employment and Labour: COVID-19
Occupational health and safety measures in workplaces, 2020
- Department of Employment and Labour: Workplace
Preparedness, COVID-19
- Other Guidelines
 - DOH Guidelines
 - NICD Guidelines
 - Environmental Health Guidelines
 - Department Specific Guidelines

Occupational Health & Safety Act

- Develop workplace preparedness plans
 - Early and continuous engagement and communication
 - Prevention strategies
 - Implementation strategies
 - Monitoring and evaluation
- Development of guidelines and protocols,
- COVID-19 hazard identification and risk assessment
- Adherence to safe work practice norms



COVID-19 Health Promotion



- Create an enabling and supportive environment,
- Effective, non-repressive COVID-19 Policies
- Mediation and advocacy for employees: OHS reps and committee, management
- Development of Employee personal skills
- Activate employee participation/action
- Re-orientate Health services e.g. onsite health services, isolation and linkage of symptomatic workers

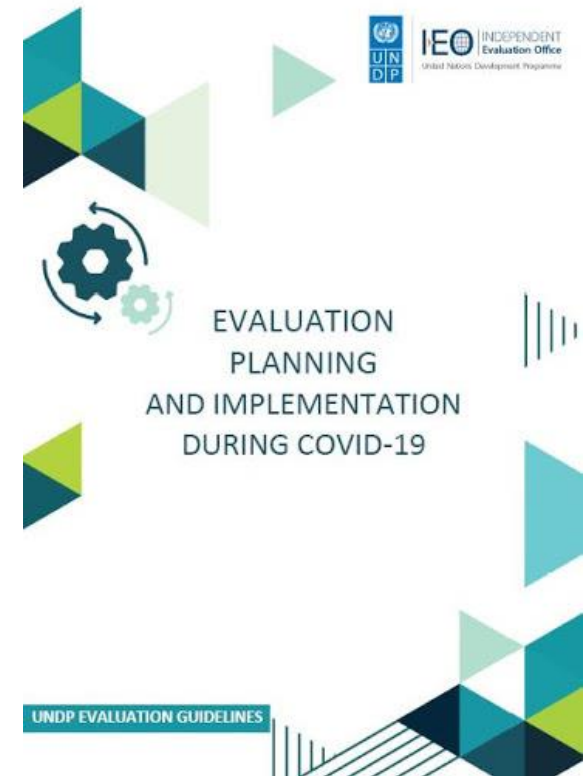
Initiating a COVID-19 Control Programme (1)

- Establish a committee/ team with clearly assigned roles and responsibilities of team members
- COVID-19 Information, Training and Education
- Workplace assessments and situational analysis
- Identification of vulnerable employees and medical surveillance
- COVID-19 Control Measures



Initiating a COVID-19 Control Programme(2)

- Evaluation and Surveillance procedures (Exposure Assessment, Monitoring, Source identification : Risk Assessment)
- Establish “SMART” Programme Indicators
- Record keeping & Standard Operating Procedures
- Program monitoring and evaluation



COVID-19 Prevention Strategies

■ PRIMORDIAL PREVENTION

- Policy

■ PRIMARY PREVENTION

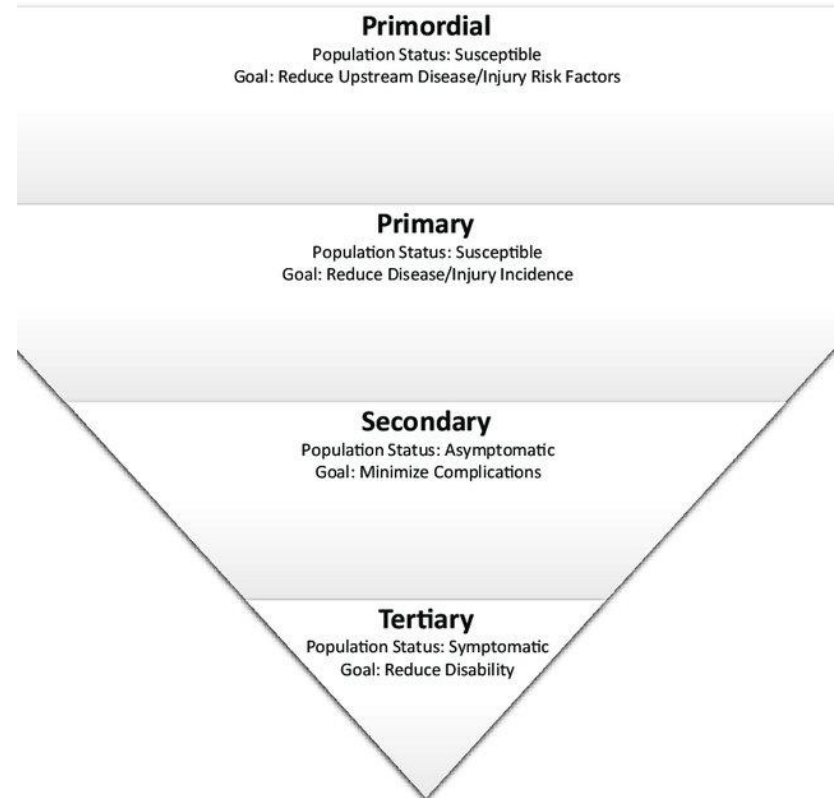
- Vaccination
- Infection Prevention Control

■ SECONDARY PREVENTION

- Medical surveillance
- Case and contact management

■ TERTIARY PREVENTION

- Long COVID-19
- Compensation



Primordial Prevention: COVID-19 policies and procedures



- National and Provincial policies
- COVID-19 Work policies and procedures (social distancing, mask and PPE wearing, quarantine and isolation, symptom screening, cleaning and disinfection, vulnerable worker)
- Workplace sick leave policy: quarantine, isolation, vaccine adverse events
- Workplace restrictions, travel and “Return to work” policy
- Vaccination policy

1^o Prevention: Infection Prevention Control

- Adherence to Disaster Management Regulations
 - Social (Physical) Distancing nb. Mobile employees , Work transport, Meals and work breaks

- Working from home
- Shift work
- Visible signage



- Consistent and appropriate use of PPE, including masks
- Ensuring good hand and respiratory hygiene in the workplace

1^o Prevention: Infection Prevention Control

- Employer must ensure constant availability of PPE, water, soap, hand sanitiser and disposable hand towels
- Maintenance of work area hygiene
- Minimise cross-deployment / movement of workers in the workplace
- Communication is Key!!!
 - Employee capacitation: optimize safe practices, minimize risk behaviours
 - Visible and accessible COVID-19 health promotion information



1^o Prevention: COVID-19 vaccination

Legal framework

- Constitution: Right to bodily and psychological integrity
- OHSA: Employer duty to ensure safe working environment
- OHSA: Employee duty to take care of health and safety and others

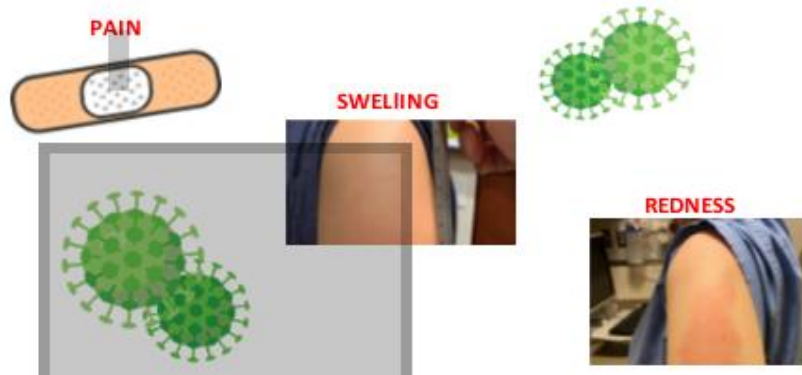
3 Phases of Vaccination Roll-out

- Phase 1: Health Care workers
- Phase 2: Essential Workers, > 60 year olds, >18 year olds with comorbidities,
Persons in congregate settings
- Phase 3: Other persons > 18 years old

COVID-19 vaccination and the workplace

Vaccination side effects

At the site of the injection



In the rest of your body



Employer will need to:

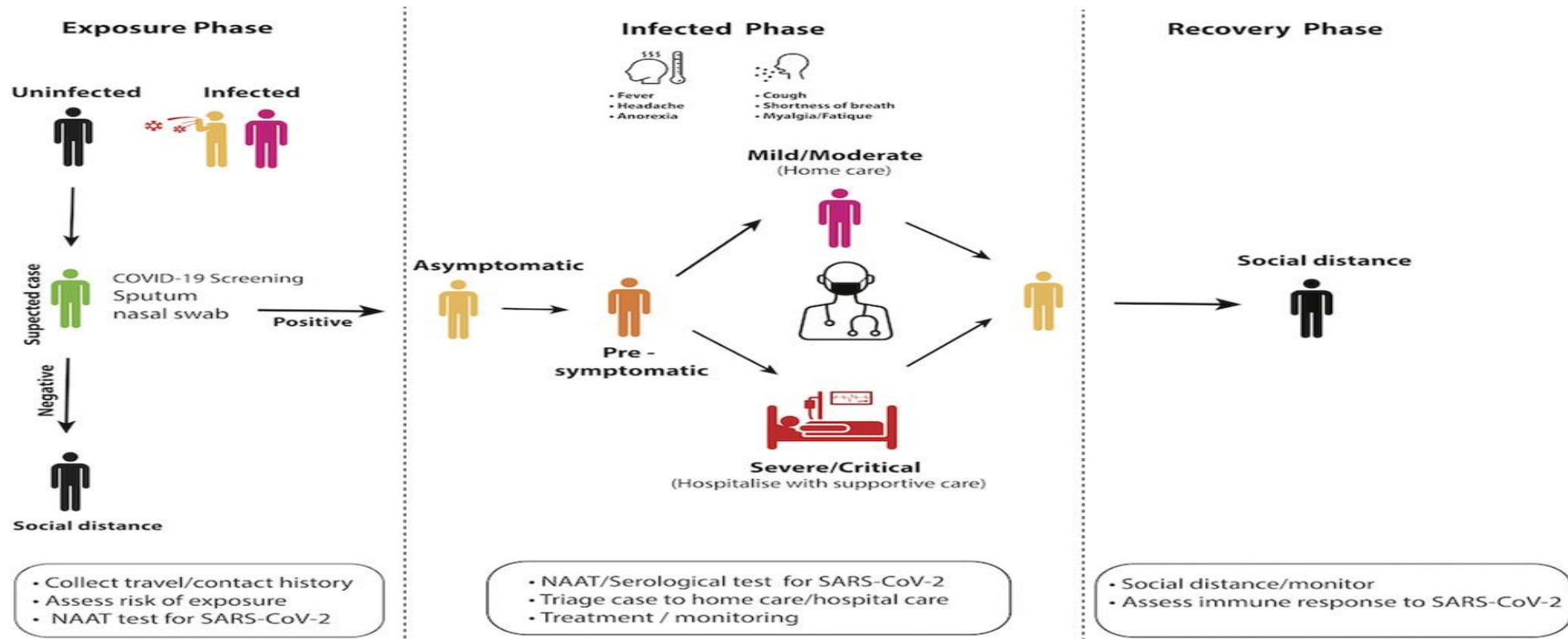
- Develop and implement policies, procedures and emergency operations plans that address COVID-19 vaccination
- Review HR policies to account for unique sick leave such as sick leave due to vaccine adverse events
- Develop communication plan for sharing credible information (e.g. absenteeism patterns, prevention plans, outbreak update)
- Provide resources at workplace for staff, clients and visitors
- Commence workplace preparation for clinic accreditation for on-site vaccination

2^o Prevention: Medical evaluation

- Systems in place to identify workers at high risk of severe COVID-19 (vulnerable workers)
- Vulnerable worker baseline health assessment and monitoring
- COVID-19 screening for employees and visitors (online/ entrance points)
- Rapid separation and testing and case identification of employees with COVID-symptoms (nb. electronic advantage: sick workers stay away)
- Implement worker specific interventions
 - Working from home
 - Placement/redeployment to low risk work area

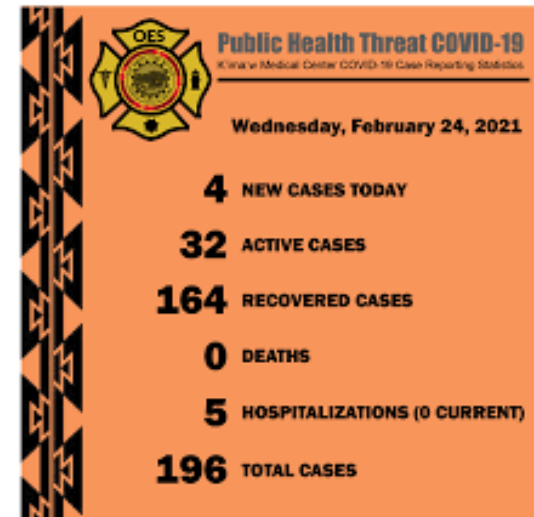
3^o Prevention: COVID-19 case and incident management

- Rapid workplace assessment and risk mitigation
 - Early isolation of COVID-19 cases
 - Rapid identification and quarantine of “close contacts” (nb. definition)
 - Early access to medical care and mental health support



3^o Prevention: COVID-19 case and incident management

- Re-assess workplace COVID-19 controls
- COVID-19 Case Notification
 - OHSS Notification of COVID-19 cases and recovery (all workplaces must be registered on the OHSS)
 - DOEL Notification of COVID-19 case
 - DOH Notification (attending health care practitioner)
- Company internal reporting and monitoring
- Support DOH contact tracing activities
- Cleaning/Decontamination of Workplace



3^o Prevention: long COVID-19

WHO

”persistent state of ill health : post COVID condition)”

British Medical Journal

non recovery for several weeks or months following the start of symptoms that were suggestive of COVID-19, irrespective of whether you were tested or not



CARDIOVASCULAR

inflammation of the heart muscle



RESPIRATORY

lung function abnormalities



DERMATOLOGIC

rash



NEUROLOGIC

loss of taste & smell, sleep disturbance



PSYCHIATRIC

depression, anxiety, changes in mood

Occupational Health and Safety, Workplace Systems and COVID-19

3^o Prevention: long COVID-19

- Most COVID cases : mild to moderate illness, 10-15%: severe disease, 5%: critically ill, Usually recover in 2-6 weeks
- All patients can have prolonged symptoms: not infectious
- Reported symptoms: normal covid symptoms, headache, chest and muscle pain, forgetfulness, depression and others
- Implications: Return to work, workplace accommodation, fitness for work, leave, compensation



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COVID-19 related Common and Statutory law principles

- Employee has a right to sick pay from employer (Basic Conditions of Employment)
- Employee has a right to receive compensation for workplace acquired COVID-19 disease
- UIF sick pay for quarantine for employees
- UIF temporary employer relief scheme
- Company leave policy: COVID-19 sick leave

The need for company specific leave policies

Type of COVID-19 leave	Right to remuneration for sick absence		
	Law	Contract	COVID-19 arrangements
Full lock-down	No work, no pay	COVID 19 policy	TERS-UIF
Alert levels	No work, no pay	COVID 19 policy	TERS-UIF
Vulnerable employees	Sick pay	Working from home & COVID 19 policy	TERS-UIF
Workplace-acquired COVID-19 ill	OD TTD		
Not workplace-acquired COVID-19 ill	Sick pay		
Workplace close contact self-quarantine	Sick pay		
Private close contact self-quarantine	No work, no pay	COVID 19 policy	
High risk behaviour- self-quarantine	No work, no pay	COVID 19 policy	

Refer to Dr. Jan Lapere (30/07/2020 presentation) Remuneration for COVID-19 related absence from work

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**EKURHULENI
HEALTH DISTRICT**



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Thank you

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