

This information sheet provides information applicable to the general workplace with regard 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 updated Consolidated Directions on Occupational Health and Safety Measures in certain workplaces.



**SYMPTOMS FOR A SUSPECTED COVID-19 CASE**  
(WITH OR WITHOUT OTHER SYMPTOMS; NDOH GUIDELINES FOR  
SYMPTOM MONITORING & MANAGEMENT V6 12 DEC 2020)



**COUGH    SHORTNESS OF BREATH    SORE THROAT**



**LOSS OF SENSE OF SMELL    DISTORTION OF SENSE OF TASTE**

**TRANSMISSION**

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

**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 and/or vaccination, for each job category, task and work 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

**VULNERABLE WORKERS**

Although any person may be at risk of contracting COVID-19, certain groups of people are at higher risk of developing severe illness if infected with the virus. These include:

- **Employees aged 60 years and older**
- **Employees of any age with one or more of the listed chronic conditions** (especially if the condition is not well controlled)
- **Employees with severe obesity** (body mass index  $\geq 40$ )
- **Employees that are immunocompromised**
- **Employees that are >28 weeks pregnant** (especially in combination with any of the listed conditions)

**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.
- ▶ <https://www.nicd.ac.za/i-think-i-have-covid-19-what-now/>

**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](https://www.nicd.ac.za)) provides detailed information and guidelines with regard to the current case definition, and the process to get tested. Tests can be performed at public or private laboratories, including NHLS mobile facilities.

**COVID-19 toll free public hotline: 0800 029 999; WhatsApp support line: 0600-123456**

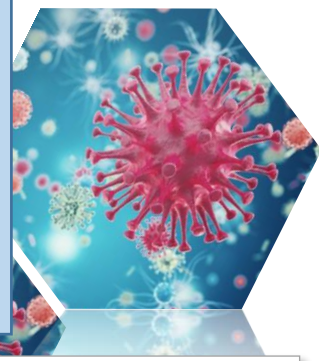
**WORKERS RIGHTS**

**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 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**

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

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



## Prevention & control of workplace exposure to COVID-19

This is a summary of measures included in the Consolidated Direction on Occupational Health and Safety Measures in Certain Workplaces, R. 499 of 11 June 2021 (Referred to as "the Directions"). Please consult the Directions and other referenced material for full details.

### Risk Assessment

- ▶ Every employer must conduct a risk assessment at the workplace in accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Regulations for Hazardous Biological Agents and the Directions, considering operational requirements and any specific circumstances

### Administrative Measures

- ▶ Comply with reporting, submissions and assistance requirements as specified in the Directions, regarding risk assessment, plan and policy records, diagnosed cases of COVID-19 amongst employees, contact tracing, etc.
- ▶ Provide employees with information and training on the Directions, the applicable legislation and regulations, as well as the measures implemented to adhere to these
- ▶ Employees should disclose the required information where applicable, and take sick leave and stay at home when sick or displaying symptoms associated with COVID-19
- ▶ A COVID-19 compliance officer must be appointed to oversee the implementation of the plan, and adherence to standards & protocols
- ▶ Minimize number of employees at the workplace through e.g. shift regimes, rotation, remote working arrangements
- ▶ Minimize contact of employees with other employees and the public
- ▶ Investigate the cause of each diagnosed case, determine possible failure of control measures, and review the risk assessment
- ▶ Implement all measures applicable to workplaces to which the public have access
- ▶ Support employee vaccination, in line with the National initiative

### Cloth Masks

- ▶ Every employee must be supplied 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
- ▶ Employers must ensure that workers are instructed, trained and supervised to use masks correctly

### Ventilation

- ▶ Every workplace must be well ventilated by natural or mechanical means to reduce the SARS-CoV-2 airborne concentration

### Plans for Protective Measures

- ▶ Based on the risk assessment, the employer must develop / amend a plan before opening, outlining protective measures for phased return of employees, including measures regarding vaccination considering the guidelines in Annexure C of the Directions
- ▶ The plan must describe implementation of all the required measures to ensure that the workplace meets the standard of health protocols, requirements for vaccination where applicable, adequate space for employees and social distancing for the public and service providers

### 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

### Symptom Screening

- ▶ Employees must be screened for the specified symptoms associated with COVID-19 on arrival at the workplace
- ▶ Employees must self-report if they start experiencing any of the specified symptoms while at work
- ▶ Follow the measures specified when an employee presents with any of the symptoms, or test positive
- ▶ Assess the risk of transmission, disinfect the work area, perform contact tracing, and refer workers who may be at risk for screening

### Sanitizers, Disinfectants & Handwashing

- ▶ 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

### Specific PPE

- ▶ Employees must wear the required, provided PPE applicable to the specific task as identified by the risk assessment



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

**Workplace Hotline: 0800 2121 75**

**Occupational Health Surveillance System [OHSS]**

General queries for data submission: 0723215503 | 0713981169 | OHSSWorkplace@nioh.ac.za

www.nioh.ac.za | info@nioh.ac.za | twitter: @nioh\_sa

 **NATIONAL HEALTH  
LABORATORY SERVICE**

 **NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR  
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH**  
Division of the National Health Laboratory Service

REFERENCES: Department of Health, Republic of South Africa. COVID-19 online resource and news portal. <https://sacoronavirus.gov.za/>; South African Government. Disaster Management Act: Consolidated Direction on Occupational Health and Safety Measures in Certain Workplaces 11 June 2021. [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/202106/44700read11292gon499.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202106/44700read11292gon499.pdf); 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>; 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>