

Emergency Management Services

SARS-CoV-2 is a respiratory virus that was identified late 2019. The virus causes diseases of varying severities ranging from mild (similar to the common cold) to severe (pneumonia), with many asymptomatic cases noted.

TRANSMISSION



- ▶ Person-to-person **contact** or touching contaminated surfaces
- ▶ Spread via respiratory **aerosols** commonly through coughing and sneezing
- ▶ Incubation period is between 2-14 days

Common sequence to acquire COVID – 19

Source – Contact with an infected individual or contaminated material
 Inoculation – There must be an inoculation process from the source to the recipient e.g. inhalation of aerosols or touching your face with a contaminated hand

Common symptoms of COVID-19:



Image source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19-symptoms.pdf>

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

- W**ash hands regularly using soap and water (~20 sec) or sanitize using 70% alcohol sanitizer
- 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 properly
- R**eport any situation likely to present a potential or serious danger to life or health
- S**upport and encourage COVID-19 vaccination

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL SOURCES



Employers should:

- Have a workplace policy and procedure and ensure workers are familiar with it.
- The policy should include 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.
- Identify exposure risks for different categories of workers and implement appropriate control measures.
- Determine if workers could be exposed to activities or materials where the virus may be encountered.
- Review policies around business travel, sick leave, and other related policies to account for COVID-19.



Different workers have different risk exposures.

Based on job specific risk assessments, consider the following:

- **Office based worker**
 - Administration and clerical – where sharing of equipment is unlikely
 - Call centre and communal space sharing – where sharing of equipment is likely e.g. computers, desks, telephones, headsets etc.
- **Field workers** exposed to confirmed, suspected or potential source of infection



Field workers should:

- ▶ Understand details of the incident you are responding to and the associated COVID-19 risk.
- ▶ Ensure adequate and appropriate PPE is available. 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 or heavily contaminated,*
 - *Disposable isolation gown,*
 - *Respiratory protection (e.g. N-95 respirator), and*
 - *Eye protection (e.g. goggles or disposable face shield that fully covers the front and sides of the face).*
- ▶ Drivers, if they provide direct patient care (e.g., moving patients onto stretchers), should wear all required PPE as indicated by the risk assessment. The risk assessment must also consider vehicles that do not have an isolated driver's compartment
- ▶ Avoid touching your face especially while working.
- ▶ After the patient is released, remove and discard PPE and perform hand hygiene.
- ▶ Used PPE should be considered contaminated and discarded in accordance with safe practice.
- ▶ Other required aspects of Standard Precautions (e.g. injection safety, hand hygiene) must continue.
- ▶ Special precautions may be required if an aerosol-generating procedure is performed e.g.:
 - *bag valve mask (BVM) ventilation,*
 - *oropharyngeal suctioning,*
 - *endotracheal intubation,*
 - *nebulizer treatment,*
 - *continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP),*
 - *resuscitation involving emergency intubation or cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)*
- ▶ Consider ventilation in the vehicle when transporting a patient to limit exposure.
- ▶ The cleaning of a vehicle after transporting a COVID-19 patient should be managed with the appropriate means and controls.
- ▶ All EMS workers should be encouraged to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19

Office based workers should:


- ▶ Rearrange work stations to ensure 1.5m spacing between workers. Where not possible erect barriers.
- ▶ Ensure adequate ventilation and sunlight into offices.
- ▶ Practice 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 such as virtual meetings rather than face-to-face.
- ▶ Frequent routine cleaning of touched surfaces (e.g. headsets, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, remote controls, desks, keyboards, etc.).
- ▶ All EMS workers should be encouraged to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19



Vaccinations: COVID-19 vaccines are available through the National Department of Health.

<https://sacoronavirus.co.za/vaccine-updates/>

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

 Alert your employer and occupational health clinic immediately.

 If you are experiencing symptoms, inform your health care provider



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 | OHSWorkplace@nioh.ac.za

OPERATING HOURS for the OHSS hotline: Mon-Fri: 08h00 - 17h00, Weekends and public holidays: Closed

www.nioh.ac.za

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twitter: @nioh_sa

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