



COVID-19 control measures & current practices

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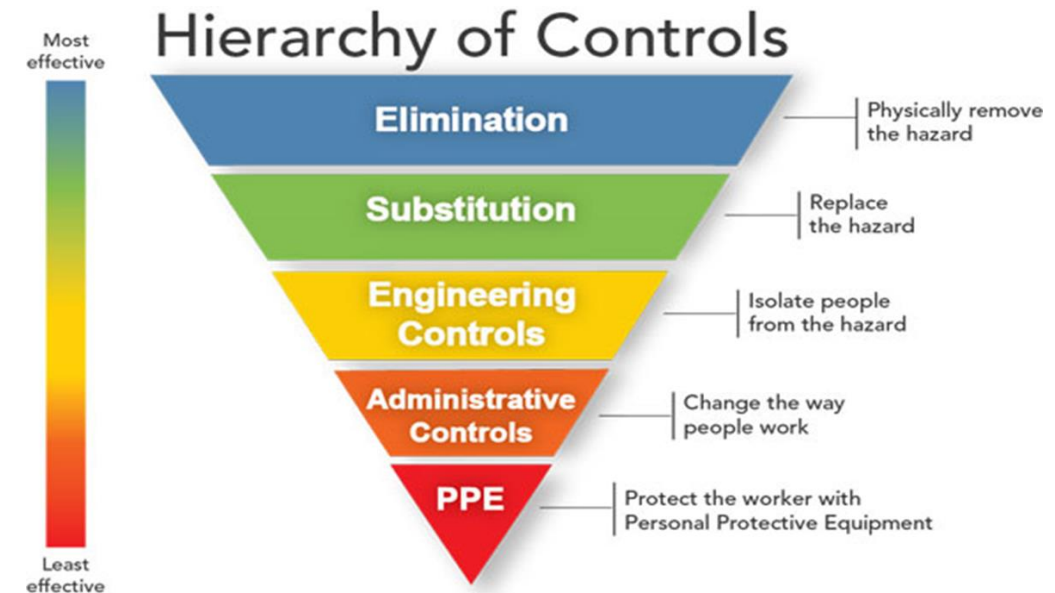
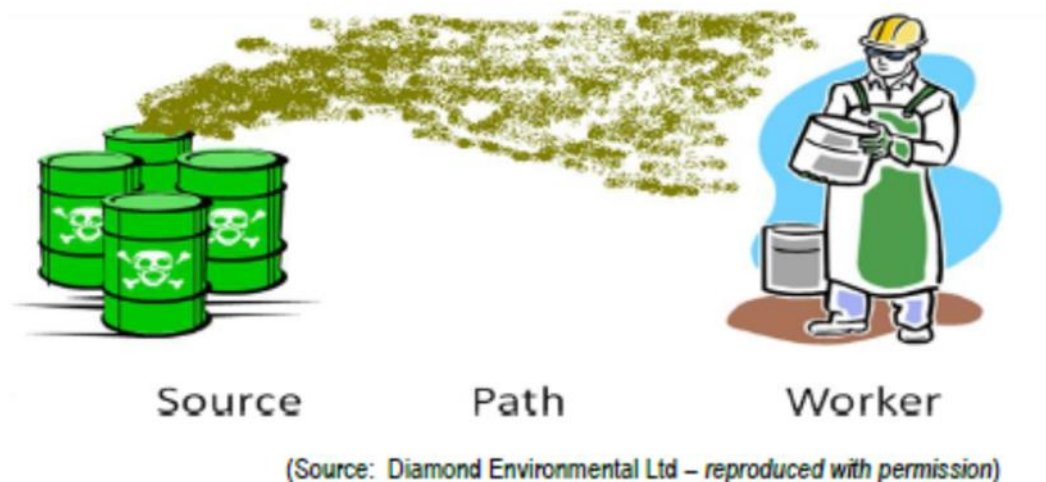
Introduction

- Control measures form part of the risk management process and are implemented to remove or reduce exposure of persons (to an acceptable level) at the workplace to a hazard that may be harmful to their health
- They are recommended after a health risk assessment (or HRA review), following a qualitatively or quantitative method
- Qualitative risk assessment uses a risk assessment tool and matrix to qualify risks whereas quantitative involve measurements and results compared with OELs or guidance values to establish compliance or conformance and exceedance



Applications of control measures

- At the source (where the hazard originates from)
- Along the path (where the hazard "travels")
- At the worker



Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/hierarchy/default.html>



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Effective Control Measures in Specific Workplaces

Which Regulations and Directions are still applicable?

- Regulations published in terms of section 27(1) of the Disaster Management Act (57 of 2002), as well as Directions published under those Regulations, ceased to have legal effect when the declaration of the National State of Disaster expired on 4 April 2022
- The Hazardous Biological Agents Regulations promulgated on 16 March 2022 included SARS-CoV-2 as a Group 3 Hazardous Biological Agent, placing a legal responsibility on employers to implement measures to limit exposure and mitigate risk of infection
- The Department of Employment and Labour published the Code of Practice: Managing Exposure to SARS-CoV-2 in the Workplace, which came into effect on the date of the lapsing of the declaration of declaration of the National State of Disaster (4 April 2022)
- The purpose of this Code was to provide guidance to employers and employees to continue managing exposure to SARS-CoV-2 in the workplace, to assess risks to health at the workplace, and implement suitable measures to mitigate those risks

Do employers currently still have any duties or responsibilities with regard to COVID-19?

- The Occupational Health and Safety Act (85 of 1993) requires the employer to provide and maintain as far as is reasonably practicable a working environment that is safe and without risks to the health of workers and to take steps as may be reasonably practicable to limit or mitigate any hazard or potential hazard.
- It also requires employers to ensure that customers, clients or contractors and their workers who enter their workplace or come into contact with their employees are not exposed to hazards to their health or safety.
- Employers therefore still have a duty to determine the risk of exposure and the control measures to limit infection, transmission and mitigate the risk of serious illness or death on the part of employees and other persons who may be directly affected by the activities of the workplace.

How will we know which measures are applicable to our specific work environment?

- Conduct a risk assessment to identify any hazards, in this case Hazardous Biological Agents, that may be present in a workplace, and assess the risk it may pose to the health of employees, customers and/or members of the public
- Identify suitable measures to protect the health of employees, customers and/or members of the public, in consultation with the trade union representing employees, or the health and safety committee established for that workplace, and communicate this to all employees via e.g., policies and procedures.
- Each situation may require special measures to be implemented by employers in order to prevent infection and transmission of HBA or mitigate the risk of serious illness or death.
- Measures may include requirements regarding any / all of:
 - Reporting of symptoms,
 - Vaccination where applicable,
 - Personal protective equipment,
 - Ventilation,
 - Social distancing measures,
 - Personal hygiene measures, e.g., wearing of facecloth masks, barriers, hand washing, sanitisers and surface disinfectants.

Which practices implemented during the pandemic should we incorporate in our work environment?

- Take responsibility for your own health and safety, as well as the health and safety of those around you
- Follow the internal organisational policies and procedures applicable to your workplace
- Act in a responsible manner when feeling ill, to ensure that we don't put others at risk of being infected
- Wear a cloth / surgical mask if coughing or sneezing
- Seek medical advice when sick, and stay at home when advised to do so by a medical practitioner
- Keep a reasonable distance from colleagues or members of the public to avoid transmission of any infection, where applicable
- Wash your hands regularly & use hand and/or surface sanitizers where possible

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the impact of hazardous biological agents in the work environment, and introduced us to basic measures to guard against infection. Many of the lessons learned from COVID-19 are still relevant, and if followed, can contribute to a safer and healthier workplace.



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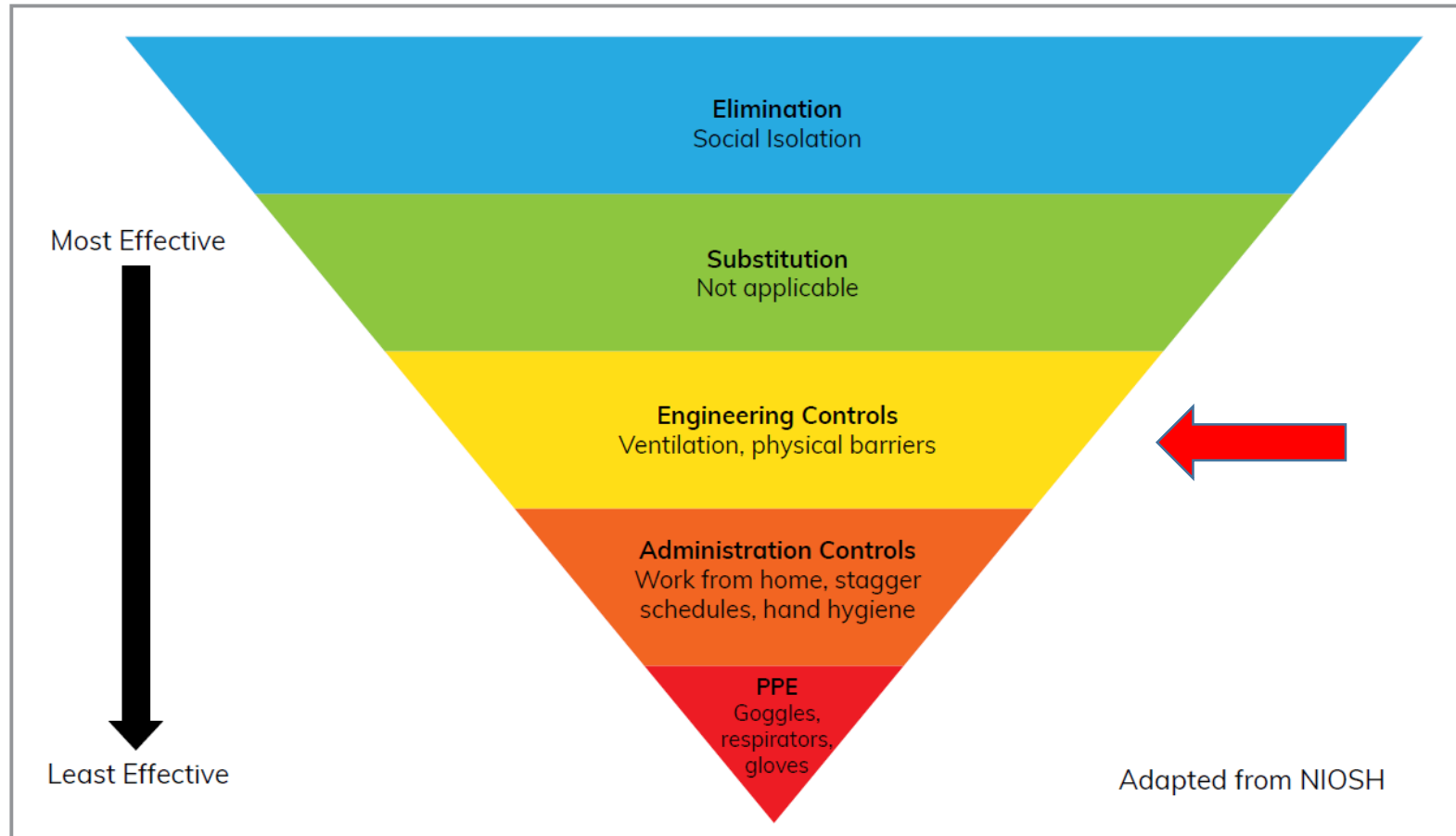


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Adequate Ventilation

How important is ventilation as a control measure for HBA's?



What is “adequate ventilation”?

- The key – the amount of “fresh” (clean) air introduced into the space
- This will depend on:
 - How hazardous, or infectious is the contaminant/s
 - The level, or expected concentration (for chemical agents)
 - How many people / workers are present?
 - What type of activities are taking place in the space
 - How large is the space?

Poor ventilation



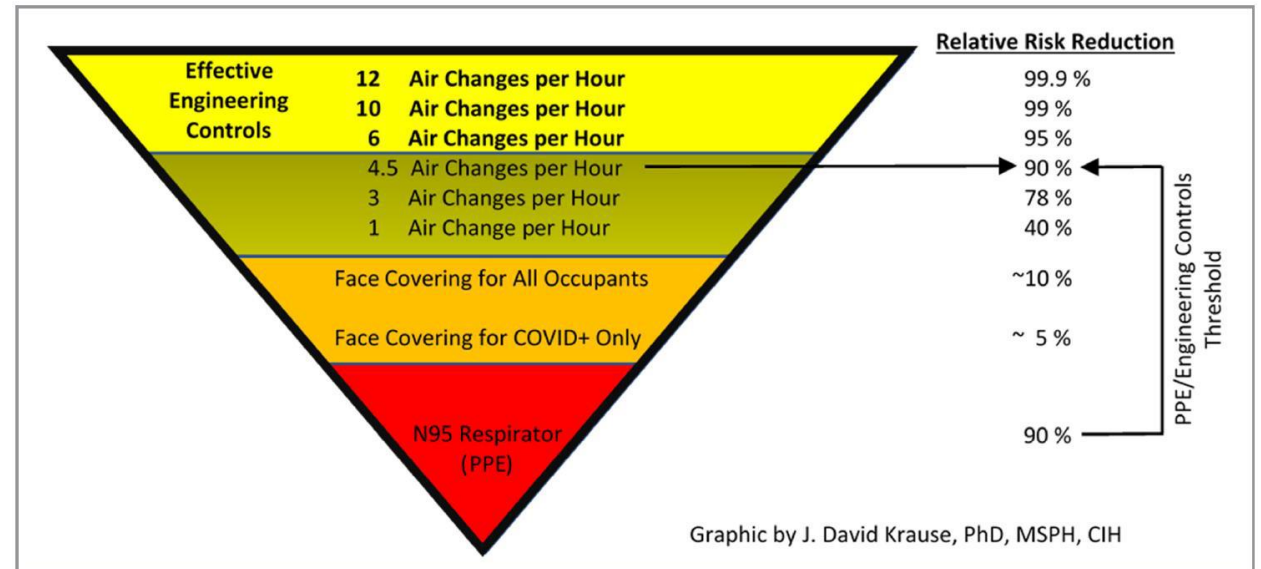
Good ventilation



How to assess “adequate ventilation”?

- Air changes per hour (ACH)
- Litre / second / person (L/s/p)
- Carbon dioxide levels

Air changes per hour	Minutes required for removal efficiency	
	99%	99.9%
2	138	207
4	69	104
6	46	69
12	23	35
15	18	28
20	14	21
50	6	8
400	<1	1



Graphic by J. David Krause, PhD, MSPH, CIH

How to improve ventilation?

- Introduce fresh air – open windows!
- Install mechanical ventilation with fresh air supply
- Check and maintain regularly (clean/replace filters)
- Monitor indoor air quality (IAQ)



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Thank You!