



ALBEMARLE REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES  
Partners in Public Health

## **COVID-19 - Frequently Asked Questions for Businesses and Employers**

This information is based on what is currently known about COVID-19. All employers need to consider how best to decrease the spread of COVID-19 and lower the impact in their workplace. This may include activities in one or more of the following areas:

- Reduce transmission among employees.
- Maintain healthy business operations.
- Maintain a healthy work environment.

### **How can I reduce transmission among employees?**

**Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:**

- Employees who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Sick employees should follow CDC-recommended steps. Employees should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments. What to do if you are sick - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow CDC recommended precautions. Caring for someone sick at home - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html>
- Be aware that some employees may be at higher risk for serious illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions. Consider minimizing face-to-face contact between these employees or assign work tasks that allow them to maintain a distance of six feet from other workers, customers and visitors, or to telework if possible.

### **How can I maintain social distancing in the workplace?**

Social distancing means avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (at least 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible. Strategies that businesses could use include:

- Allowing flexible worksites (such as telework)
- Allowing flexible work hours (such as staggered shifts)
- Increasing physical space between employees at the worksite
- Increasing physical space between employees and customers (such as a drive-through and partitions)
- Implementing flexible meeting and travel options (such as postponing non-essential meetings or events)
- Downsizing operations
- Delivering services remotely (e.g., phone, video, or web)
- Delivering products through curbside pick-up or delivery

## **When can employees return to work if they are sick with COVID-19 or believe they may have it?**

- Employees may discontinue isolation and return to normal activities when they can answer YES to all three of these questions:
  - Has been at least 7 days since their first day of illness?
  - Have they have been without fever for three days (72 hours)?
  - Are their other symptoms improved?
  - Individuals may also receive additional guidance in consultation with their healthcare providers and state and local health departments.
- Employers should not ask for a negative COVID-19 test or a note from a medical provider for employees to return to work. While previous guidance suggested a negative test, due to community spread and current testing guidelines, this is no longer necessary.

## **Should I require employees to provide a doctor's note or positive COVID-19 results?**

- Employers should not require sick employees to provide a COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.

## Should we be screening employees for COVID-19 symptoms such as temperature checks?

Screening employees is an optional strategy that employers may use. There are several methods that employers can use to protect the employee conducting the temperature screening. The most protective methods incorporate social distancing (maintaining a distance of 6 feet from others), or physical barriers to eliminate or minimize the screener's exposures due to close contact with a person who has symptoms during screening. Examples to consider that incorporate these types of controls for temperature screening include:

- **Reliance on Social Distancing:** Ask employees to take their own temperature either before coming to the workplace or upon arrival at the workplace. Upon their arrival, stand at least 6 feet away from the employee and:
  - Ask the employee to confirm that their temperature is less than 100.4° F (38.0° C), and confirm that they are not experiencing coughing or shortness of breath.
  - Make a visual inspection of the employee for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks or fatigue.
  - Screening staff do not need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) if they can maintain a distance of 6 feet.

## How do I clean and disinfect my business to reduce the spread of COVID-19?

### Electronics

- For electronics such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines, remove visible contamination if present.
  - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.
  - Consider use of wipe able covers for electronics.
  - If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol to disinfect touch screens. Dry surfaces thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids.

### Hard (Non-porous) Surfaces

- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.
  - Diluted household bleach solutions (at least 1000ppm sodium hypochlorite) can be used if appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer's instructions for application, ensuring a contact time of at least 1 minute, and allowing proper

ventilation during and after application. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.

- Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:
  - 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) bleach per gallon of water or
  - 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

### **Soft (Porous) Surfaces**

- For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. After cleaning:
  - If the items can be laundered, launder items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and then dry items completely.

## **Do my employees need to wear cloth face coverings or personal protective equipment to protect themselves while working?**

CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, especially in areas of significant community transmission. Cloth face coverings may prevent people who don't know they have the virus from transmitting it to others. These face coverings are not surgical masks or respirators and are not appropriate substitutes for them in workplaces where masks or respirators are recommended or required.

Employees should continue to follow their routine policies and procedures for PPE (if any) that they would ordinarily use for their job tasks. When cleaning and disinfecting, employees should always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used. Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) may be needed based on setting

## **For additional resources related to businesses and employers see below -**

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/covid19/covid-19-businesses-and-employers>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-small-business.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html>

Further information about COVID-19 can be found here:

Albemarle Regional Health Services - <http://www.arhs-nc.org/> or call 252-338-WELL

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services - <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/>

Center for Disease Control - <https://www.cdc.gov/>