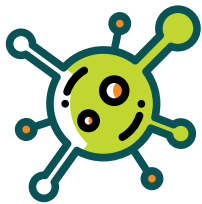


Preventing the Spread of Novel Coronavirus: The CDC Releases Guidelines for Employers



The novel coronavirus is currently making headlines for its spread throughout China and has now been detected in other locations internationally. Although the virus is [not currently spreading in the](#)

[US, the CDC has cautioned we are likely to see more cases in the US.](#)

There are steps employers can take to help control infection in their own workforce. This interim guidance is based on what is currently known **about the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided guidance that they will continue to update as additional information becomes available. Alliant does not provide guidance on employment law or occupational health policy development regarding this guidance by the CDC. However, we are sharing this information to support employers' needs for timely and credible resources to support internal business discussions. For the most up-to-date information about this virus, we recommend employers continually check the [CDC](#) and [World Health Organization](#) websites.

The good news for employers is the CDC already has policies in place to combat this type of illness. The same steps they take to deal with the common flu are also [recommended by the CDC for the novel coronavirus](#): encouraging employees to utilize sick days and flex time when they're not feeling well.

Researchers have studied the choices employees make when ill, finding most employees take leave when sick. However, if sick employees go to work, it's most often to save their leave or because they have too much work. Encouraging ill employees to work from home, when applicable, can prevent the spread of infection and even more employees taking time off due to illness. Encouraging employees who feel under the weather to work from home is what's best for the health of both employees and the business.

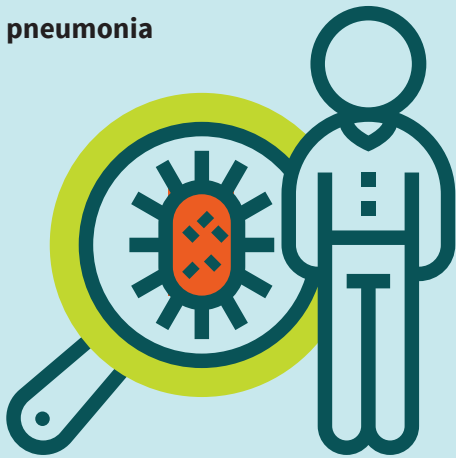
While we are most often in the business of supporting employers' efforts for keep employees at work, in this case (as with other highly contagious viruses, such as the common flu), keeping sick and potentially contagious employees at home outweighs any productivity losses businesses may incur by preventing the entire workforce from becoming ill.

For healthcare institutions working with infectious respiratory illnesses, it is important to follow CDC recommendations for [Environmental Infection Control Guidance](#). Successful planning and detailed preparation is needed to control the spread of infectious respiratory illnesses and should comply with [CDC recommendations for Healthcare Professionals caring for COVID-19 patients](#); an example detailed toolkit from Massachusetts General Hospital is attached below under related documents.

What are the coronavirus symptoms?

Usually mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms occurring from 2-14 days after exposure:

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath
- pneumonia



What are the general preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Other FAQs: [click here](#)

While the news of the coronavirus is making headlines on a daily basis, it is important to think of this new virus in the context of the common/seasonal influenza prevalence. The CDC estimates the 2018-2019 influenza season was associated with more than 35.5 million illnesses, more than 16.5 million medical visits, 490,600 hospitalizations, and 34,200 deaths. As such, any and all recommendations you make as an employer to employees directly should be centered around recommendations the CDC has made for many years in an attempt to curtail the spread of other respiratory viruses, including the common flu.

Related Documents and Guidance:

CDC Guidance

- [CDC's Coronavirus Guidance for Employers](#)
- [Environmental Infection Control Guidance](#)
- [Information for Healthcare Professionals](#)
- [COVID-19 Website](#)
- [What You Need to Know About COVID-19.pdf icon](#)
- [What to Do If You Are Sick With COVID-19.pdf icon](#)
- [Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Exposure in Travel-associated or Community Settings](#)
- [Health Alert Network](#)
- [Travelers' Health Website](#)
- [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's Small Business International Travel Resource Travel Planner.pdf icon](#)
- [2019 Novel Coronavirus Recommendations for Ships](#)

Other Federal Agencies and Partners

- OSHA Guidance: https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/novel_coronavirus/index.htmlexternal icon
- World Health Organization [Pandemic preparedness](#)
- [IBI Research: Employees' Work Responses to Episodes of Illness: Evidence From the American Time Use Survey](#)
- [Massachusetts General Hospital toolkit](#)