

Managers Guidance for suspected case of COVID19 at work

This guidance is for when an employee is at work with a suspected case of COVID19 or they report a member of their household has a suspected case. Also check your business management policy for other specific information (there is an NFU Mutual Example Coronavirus (Covid-19) Management Policy if you don't have one).

1. Immediately send the member of staff home to self isolate

If the symptoms are mild enough and they can still drive you should send them home to self isolate and remind them to inform all members of their household to self isolate for 14 days.

Remind them if their symptoms get worse or they are worried to ring their GP / dial 111 and report back to their manager on the outcome. If they have serious breathing difficulties they should dial 999.

Should any member of their household also work for the business they must also be sent home to self isolate regardless or not if they have any symptoms.

2. What if they are not well enough to drive home or normally use public transport to get to work?

Wherever possible, put the person in a place away from others behind a closed door. If there is no physically separate room, ask others who are not involved in providing assistance to stay at least 2 metres away from the individual. If barriers or screens are available, these may be used. If possible open a window for ventilation.

The individual who is unwell should call NHS 111 from their mobile, or 999 if an emergency (if they are seriously ill). If that is not possible call on their behalf standing more than 2 meters away.

Whilst they wait for advice from NHS 111 or an ambulance to arrive, they should remain at least 2 metres from other people. They should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in a bag or pocket then throw the tissue in the bin. If they don't have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.

If they need to go to the bathroom whilst waiting for medical assistance, they should use a separate bathroom if available, and this should be sanitised after use.

3. Clean and sanitise their work area and places they have been at work

The infection risk following contamination of the environment decreases over time. Studies of other viruses in the same family suggest that, in most circumstances, the risk is likely to be reduced significantly after 72 hours.

Their immediate work area and equipment should be cleaned and disinfected along with all frequently touched areas on their route to their work area including light switches, hand-rails, door handles and canteen / kitchen areas and equipment and bathrooms.

Don't forget to clean the work equipment they use such as telephones, keyboard, mouse, desk, desk lamp switch, hard chairs or other machinery / equipment controls plus the kitchen kettle and taps in both kitchens and bathrooms. All desks, counters, sinks need to be cleaned and sanitised.

Detailed cleaning requirements are listed in the Governments document <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

Anyone cleaning must wear disposable or washing-up gloves and aprons for cleaning. Further guidance is in the government document for areas with heavy contamination of bodily fluids for increased PPE.

Use disposable cloths or paper roll and clean hard surfaces with warm soapy water then disinfect these surfaces with the cleaning products you normally use. Do check your disinfectant is effective against enveloped viruses or follow the guidance in the government document. Use disposable mop heads to clean all hard floor surfaces.

When items cannot be cleaned using detergents or laundered such as upholstered chairs, steam cleaning should be used.

Any items that are heavily contaminated with body fluids and cannot be cleaned and sanitised by washing should be disposed of.

Wash hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds, and after removing gloves, aprons and other protection used while cleaning

The gloves, aprons and disposable cloths should be double-bagged, then stored securely for 72 hours then thrown away in the regular rubbish after cleaning is finished. Follow the government guidance document for further waste information.

4. How long should staff isolate

If they live alone and have symptoms of COVID19, however mild they must stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms started – or longer if they still have a fever / high temperature.

If they live with others who had symptoms of COVID19 they must stay at home for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill. If anyone else in the household starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14-day isolation period.

Always follow the latest government guidance on this <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

5. Investigate if this a potential case contracted at work?

Check with HR / Manager if this is a work related case if this needs to be reported under The Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/riddor-reporting-coronavirus.htm>

A report under RIDDOR (The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) is required when:

- an unintended incident at work has led to someone's possible or actual exposure to coronavirus. This must be reported as a dangerous occurrence.
- a worker has been diagnosed as having COVID 19 and there is reasonable evidence that it was caused by exposure at work. This must be reported as a case of disease.
- a worker has died as a result of occupational exposure to coronavirus.

6. Follow up via phone / email / text to the member of staff

Ask how they are and if the symptoms have got worse or changed. Don't forget the symptoms may come in waves where staff start to feel better then get worse again.

Agree with the staff member about how to maintain contact with them e.g. daily contact, 3 - 5 days later. If they live alone the contact should be daily if the member of staff is OK with this. Agree the best means of communication e.g. phone call, text, WhatsApp, email etc).

Agree who you should escalate to if the member of staff does not respond to the agreed contact (next of kin, household member, family or neighbour etc.).

Remind them they can share their mobile number with the NHS to get text updates about coronavirus from the NHS which offer advice, ask how they are and provide links to trusted sources of information and support which is another good option if they live alone.

Ask if they have sufficient food supplies at home for the isolation period to prevent the likelihood of spreading infection within the community? Is there anyone they or you can ring to get them some help?

7. Trace who they have had close contact with at work

A close contact can be defined as someone living in the same household, someone who had direct or physical contact with an infected person, or someone who has remained within two metres of the patient for longer than 15 minutes.

This will include their work colleagues but may also include customers / delivery sites etc. and they will need to be informed.

If anyone had close or direct contact with the individual, advise them that if they go on to develop symptoms (new persistent cough or fever), they should follow the advice on what to do on the NHS website

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Public Health may carry out contact tracing if the member of staff has a confirmed case and will trace all those who have been in close contact with them.

Current government guidance states that for a suspected case of COVID19 it is not necessary to close the business or workplace or send any staff home, unless government policy changes or Public Health require them to from tracing. Keep monitoring the government response page for the latest details
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>.

8. Confirm return to work

Then see the manager's guidance and return to work guidance and check if the member of staff still has a fever in which case, regardless of length of isolation they may not return to work until temperature returns to normal.

Staff do not need to continue to self-isolate if they have just a cough after 7 days, as a cough can last for several weeks after the infection has gone. However, isolation for 14 days should still be considered.

Confirm with the member of staff that their impending return to work will be communicated to colleagues and if they are happy with this.

Consider if they can continue to work from home once better rather than coming back into the workplace.

If the member of staff carries out work in other people's homes, for example tradespeople carrying out repairs and maintenance they should only come back to work if they have no symptoms.