



ABSA INTERNATIONAL

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COVID-19 FAQs FOR EMPLOYEES IN THE WORKPLACE

1. How do I protect myself while using public transportation?

While taking public transportation is discouraged, it is often the only means of transportation for those in essential jobs (healthcare, public transportation, sanitation services, etc.) to get to work. Trains, busses and subways have significantly increased their disinfection practices, and have implemented procedures to ensure drivers and other public transportation workers are healthy when they report to work. Drivers may be wearing gloves and using hand sanitizer.

If you are unaware of your city's public transportation changes due to coronavirus, check the internet. For example, many cities now have a policy to enter a bus via the rear door, in order to reduce contact with the driver. In some places, fares have been suspended to minimize driver contact. Other places expect you to show your travel card to the driver as you enter the rear door. Some busses expect you to sit at least 3 rows behind the driver.

Do not take public transportation unless it is absolutely necessary. If you must use public transportation:

- Don't ride if you are sick! Stay home.
- Consider other methods of travel, such as walking or biking, if possible.
- Telecommute, if possible, or consider alternate work hours.
- Ride public transportation during off-periods to avoid the rush and crowds, since schedules have been reduced in many places.
- Practice social distancing and maintain as much space as possible from other riders.
- Wash your hands (preferred) or use hand sanitizer after travel. Keep your hands away from your face.
- Practice sneeze and cough hygiene (use a tissue and discard, or cough/sneeze into your sleeve).

2. Should I wear a mask while I am using public transportation?

We now know from recent studies that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus lack symptoms ("asymptomatic") and that even those who eventually develop symptoms ("pre-symptomatic") can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. This means that the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing—even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms. In light of this new evidence, CDC recommends (since April 3) wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores, pharmacies, public transportation) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.

It is critical to emphasize that maintaining 6-foot social distancing remains important to slowing the spread of the virus. CDC is additionally advising the use of simple cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others. Cloth face coverings fashioned from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost can be used as an additional, voluntary public health measure.

The cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance.

Demonstration by US Surgeon General on how to make a cloth face covering at home: <https://youtu.be/tPx1yqvJgf4>

3. How can I sanitize my work area or cubicle?

It is best to clean before disinfecting the work surfaces that are of concern: your desk, keyboard, computer mouse, work phone and any other objects or surfaces that you or your coworkers touch a lot. Cleaning with soap and water or a cleaning wipe will remove dirt that can inhibit the activity of the disinfectant.

After cleaning, use an EPA approved disinfectant – EPA List N covers all disinfectants that have been approved for coronavirus. However, any broad-spectrum disinfectant should be effective against coronavirus, since it is an “enveloped” virus and is not that difficult to kill. Disinfectant wipes are a good idea so as not to apply too much liquid to keyboards and phones. Follow the label instructions for the length of time the application should remain wet.

Don't forget to disinfect your cellphone. From Apple Support: *Using a 70 percent isopropyl alcohol wipe or Clorox Disinfecting Wipes, you may gently wipe the exterior surfaces of your iPhone. Don't use bleach. Avoid getting moisture in any openings, and don't submerge your iPhone in any cleaning agents.*

After cleaning and disinfecting your work area, and often during the day (before/after eating, before/after using the restroom, leaving for home, after sneezing, etc.) remember to wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water. Hand sanitizer should be considered a backup if soap and water are not available.

Don't forget cleaning and disinfecting common areas like the shared lunchroom: microwave and handle, refrigerator and handle, sink, silverware (bringing your own is a good idea or use disposable), tables, etc.

4. What if I become ill at work?

If the employee becomes sick during the day, they should be [sent home immediately](#). Surfaces in their workspace should be [cleaned and disinfected](#). Information on persons who had contact with the ill employee during the time the employee had symptoms and 2 days prior to symptoms should be compiled. Others at the facility with close contact within 6 feet of the employee during this time would be considered exposed.

5. When may I return to work?

If you are a non-healthcare worker, review Table 1 to determine when you may return to your workplace and what precautions you need to take to prevent exposing your co-workers.

6. How do I know if I am at risk for exposure to SARS-CoV-2 at my workplace?

OSHA provides guidance to determine if the risk of exposure for your job is very high, high, medium or low. See table 2 for some examples of job types and the risk level for exposure to this virus.

References:

1. NY Times Article: **No Bus Service. Crowded Trains. Transit Systems Struggle With the Virus.**
[:https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/17/us/coronavirus-buses-trains-detroit-boston.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/17/us/coronavirus-buses-trains-detroit-boston.html)

2. VOX article, **Should you take public transit during a pandemic?** :<https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2020/3/13/21177324/public-transit-pandemic-coronavirus>
3. CNN Article: **How to keep your workplace clean -- and yourself healthy -- during the novel coronavirus outbreak:** <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/11/health/how-to-clean-work-desk-coronavirus-wellness-trnd/index.html>
4. Apple support: Cleaning your iPhone: <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT207123>
5. EPA List N: **Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2**, <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
6. **CDC Recommendation Regarding the Use of Cloth Face Coverings, Especially in Areas of Significant Community-Based Transmission:**<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>
7. Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html>

Table 1 When should I go back to my workplace?

<i>Test-based strategy - Persons who have COVID-19 who have symptoms (tested positive)</i>	<i>Non-test-based strategy - Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms</i>	<i>Person with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 who have not had any symptoms</i>	<i>Person with symptoms and no testing</i>	<i>Person with no symptoms and no testing</i>	<i>Person potentially exposed to COVID-19</i>	<i>Immunocompromised Persons with COVID-19</i>
<p>Exclude from work until: Resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and,</p> <p>Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) and,</p> <p>Negative results of an FDA Emergency Use Authorized molecular assay for COVID-19 from at least two consecutive nasopharyngeal swab specimens collected ≥ 24 hours apart (collect one swab every time)</p>	<p>Exclude from work until: At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and,</p> <p>improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and,</p> <p>At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared</p>	<p>Should be excluded from work until 7 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test.</p>	<p>Exclude from work until: Resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and,</p> <p>Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)</p>		<p>14 days of quarantine after exposure based on the time it takes to develop illness if infected</p>	<p>Remain in isolation until:</p> <p>Resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and,</p> <p>Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) and,</p> <p>Negative results of an FDA Emergency Use Authorized molecular assay for COVID-19 from at least two consecutive nasopharyngeal swab specimens collected ≥ 24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens)</p>
<p>What to wear? Facemask (i.e. surgical mask, procedure mask) until all symptoms are completely resolved or 14 days after onset of symptoms</p>	<p>What to wear? Facemask (i.e. surgical mask, procedure mask) until all symptoms are completely resolved or 14 days after onset of symptoms</p>	<p>For additional 3 days: these persons should continue to limit contact (stay 6 feet away from others) and limit potential of dispersal of respiratory secretions by wearing a covering for their nose and mouth whenever they are in settings where other persons are present. In community settings, this covering may be a barrier mask, such as a bandana, scarf, or cloth mask. The covering does not refer to a medical mask or respirator.</p>	<p>What to wear? Cloth face covering</p>	<p>What to wear? Cloth face covering</p>	<p>Stay in isolation and then follow the recommendations presented for positive or with symptoms</p>	<p>What to wear? Facemask (i.e. surgical mask, procedure mask) until all symptoms are completely resolved or 14 days after onset of symptoms</p>

Table 2 Examples of job types and level of risk for exposure to SARS-CoV-2 and engineering & administrative control, Personal Protective Equipment and work practices to mitigate the risks.

	Example of job risk	Engineering controls	Administrative controls	Safe work practices	PPE
High or Very High Exposure Risk:	<p>Very high exposure risk: jobs are those with high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19 during specific medical, postmortem, or laboratory procedures</p> <p>High exposure risk: jobs are those with high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19.</p>	<p>Healthcare: isolation rooms Research: BSL3 containment Increase air exchange in facility</p>	<p>Healthcare: identification and isolation of patients, enhanced medical monitoring of workers; training and education of workers Research: BSL3 procedures and practices (i.e. limit aerosol formation, no sharps, etc.) Occupational surveillance</p>	<p>Provide emergency responders and other essential personnel who may be exposed while working away from fixed facilities with alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol for decontamination in the field Increase the frequency of cleaning commonly touched surfaces.</p>	<p>gloves, a gown, a face shield or goggles, and either a face mask or a respirator, depending on their job tasks and exposure risks. Need respirator: Those who work closely with (either in contact with or within 6 feet of) patients diagnosed with COVID-19, or handle SARS-CoV-2 virus</p>
Medium Exposure Risk	<p>jobs include those that require frequent and/or close contact with (i.e., within 6 feet of) people who may be infected with SARS-CoV-2, but who are not known or suspected COVID-19 patients. Examples include schools, high-population-density work environments, and some high-volume retail settings</p>	<p>Install physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards, where feasible.</p>	<p>Consider offering face masks to ill employees and customers to contain respiratory secretions until they are able leave the workplace</p>	<p>Where appropriate, limit customers' and the public's access to the worksite, or restrict access to only certain workplace areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consider strategies to minimize face-to-face contact (e.g., drive through windows, phone-based communication, telework). ■ Communicate the availability of medical screening or other worker health resources (e.g., on-site nurse; telemedicine services). <p>Increase the frequency of cleaning commonly touched surfaces.</p> </p>	<p>PPE will vary according to work task: combination of gloves, a gown, a face mask, and/or a face shield or goggles.</p>
Lower Exposure Risk (Caution):	<p>jobs are those that do not require contact with people known to be, or suspected of being, infected with SARS-CoV-2 nor frequent close contact with (i.e., within 6 feet of) the general public. Workers in this category have minimal occupational contact with the public and other coworkers. Examples include grocery store stockers, mail carriers, food delivery services.</p>	<p>none needed</p>	<p>Public health communications about COVID-19 recommendations and ensure that workers have access to that information</p>	<p>Increase the frequency of cleaning commonly touched surfaces. If an employee becomes sick during the day, send them home immediately.</p>	<p>Additional PPE is not recommended for workers in the lower exposure risk group. Workers should continue to use the PPE, if any, that they would ordinarily use for other job tasks. Take your temperature before work. Wear a cloth face covering at all times. Practice social distancing in the workplace as work duties permit.</p>

OSHA Guidance on preparing workplaces for COVID-19 <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html>