

COVID-19: MANAGING THE STRESS OF RETURNING TO THE WORKPLACE



This talk is for employees who are returning to the workplace following the reopening of companies that temporarily closed or implemented a mandatory work-from-home policy due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This talk provides information on how employees can manage stress they may have about transitioning back to work, as well as information on how employees can feel safe in their work environment.

Materials to have on hand:

- Face masks and gloves (if applicable)
- Cloth face coverings (if applicable)
- Hand sanitizer (if applicable)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) hand-washing poster (if applicable)
- CDC coughing and sneezing etiquette poster (if applicable)
- Social distancing poster (if applicable)

Items for attendees to consider during the talk:

- What concerns do you have about returning to the workplace?
- Do you know the ways you can manage stress?

TALK

Are you nervous about returning to the workplace after the COVID-19 pandemic? Are you anxious about your safety while being around people other than your immediate family members for an extended period of time?

You may have mixed emotions about returning to work: You may be concerned about your own health yet feel relieved that things are slowly going back to normal. If you were infected, you may be frustrated that coworkers have unfounded fears of catching the disease from you, even though you aren't contagious anymore. You may have gone or be going through mental health challenges due to the loss of a loved one and are worried about your job performance.

To help ease your worries about possibly contracting the virus as we reenter the facility, we have put certain protocols in place to keep people safe in the work environment. Specifically, we are:

[Select the protocols in place at your facility, and elaborate as necessary]:

- Following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, procedures for employees who were infected
- Enforcing frequent hand-washing

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Supervisor/
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MANAGING THE STRESS OF RETURNING TO THE WORKPLACE

- Enforcing social distancing
- Using face masks or cloth face coverings and/or gloves
- Disinfecting high-traffic areas frequently
- Providing cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer for personal workspaces
- Allowing flexible work hours
- Limiting the number of employees in the facility

[Go over the CDC hand-washing poster, CDC coughing and sneezing etiquette poster, and/or social distancing poster if applicable.]

[Pass out face masks, cloth face coverings, gloves, and/or hand sanitizer if applicable.]

Stress management

We understand that transitioning back to the facility can be stressful, and you may feel depressed, irritable, or withdrawn. Other signs and symptoms of stress to look out for are fatigue, muscle tension or pain, mood swings, trouble concentrating, and forgetfulness.

We are offering support for those who are stressed about returning to work, including:

[Select the offerings in place at your facility]:

- Daily check-ins with your manager
- Alternative work responsibilities and schedules
- Contact with an employee assistance program
- Contact with an occupational health service
- Yoga classes
- Meditation sessions
- Weekly presentation on managing stress

Additionally, here are some ways you can reduce and manage your overall stress levels:

- **Reach out.** Just sharing your stress with others can be relieving. Turn to coworkers for support, confide in friends and family, and build new meaningful friendships.
- **Practice self-care.** Exercise is a great way to let off some steam and get your endorphins going! It's also important to nourish your body by eating healthy foods, staying hydrated with lots of water, and getting enough quality sleep each night (aim for 8 hours).
- **Organize.** You can manage stress by setting priorities, developing routines, and maintaining an accurate calendar of commitments.
- **Break bad habits.** Although it is understandable to have negative thoughts and behavior right now, they can make your job more stressful. You can make stress easier to handle by setting realistic goals, thinking positively about your work, and focusing on things you can control.
- **Be mindful.** Mindfulness or maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of your thoughts can be an effective tool for reducing stress. When you practice mindfulness, you're trying to be fully present, aware of where you are and what you're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around you.
- **Explore therapy options.** Consider meeting with a counselor or psychotherapist to discuss your feelings. Professionals can provide you with useful advice and tools to help you manage your stress levels.

COVID-19: PREVENTING THE SPREAD IN THE WORKPLACE



This talk discusses practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, including how the disease is transmitted, symptoms of COVID-19, and ways to stay safe and healthy.

Materials to have on hand:

- Hand sanitizer
- Disinfectants and cleaning products in use at the facility
- The facility's emergency preparedness or pandemic plan, if applicable

Items for attendees to consider during the talk:

- How is COVID-19 spread?
- How can you protect yourself from exposure to COVID-19?

TALK

Coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19, is a respiratory illness caused by a virus in the group of viruses known as coronaviruses. Other coronaviruses include Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS, and severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS. Most cases of COVID-19 are

mild, but the disease can become serious, and even fatal, in some people who contract it. Therefore, it's important to take steps to prevent the spread of infection in the workplace.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Some people may also experience chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell. In severe cases, patients can develop pneumonia and multiorgan failure. In general, older people and those with preexisting medical conditions are more likely to experience severe or fatal cases of COVID-19, but people without these risk factors can also become severely ill.

COVID-19 mainly spreads between people who are in close contact with one another and through respiratory droplets that are produced when an infected person talks, coughs, or sneezes. It is also possible to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or an object on which a virus-containing respiratory droplet has landed and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes. It is possible to spread the virus before developing symptoms, and some people become carriers without ever developing outward symptoms of the illness.

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COVID-19: PREVENTING THE SPREAD IN THE WORKPLACE

Because there is currently no vaccine or specific treatment for COVID-19, the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed. To prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, remember the acronym **WASH**, which stands for **Wash, Avoid, Sanitize, and Hold**:

- **Wash** your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after a cough or sneeze, after using the restroom, before eating, and after touching a surface like a door handle or coffeepot that has been touched by many people. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol. Apply hand sanitizer to the palm of one hand, rub your hands together, and rub the gel all over the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take about 20 seconds.
- **Avoid** close contact with people who are sick. Stay at least 6 feet from people outside your household and minimize unnecessary physical contact in general, such as shaking hands. During an outbreak of the virus, avoid crowds and large gatherings and limit your trips outside your home as much as possible. Take extra precautions if you or someone you are in close contact with is in one of the groups at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
- **Sanitize** surfaces that people frequently touch, such as microwave and door handles, bathroom fixtures, countertops, phones, copiers and printers, elevator buttons, shared hand tools, and machinery controls. Use a commercial disinfectant or a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water.
- **Hold** the inside of your elbow to your mouth to cover coughs and sneezes to stop the spread of the virus through hand contact. Try to cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and properly dispose of the tissue immediately after use.

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 call your healthcare provider. He or she will determine whether you need to be tested for COVID-19. If you have the virus, stay home except to get necessary medical care, and stay away from other people in your home as much as possible.

[If applicable, discuss telecommuting procedures and travel or sick leave policies applicable to COVID-19.]

Because people can spread COVID-19 without showing symptoms, during an outbreak, it is a good idea to wear a cloth face covering in public places. Follow the current guidance of your state or local health agency to determine when this step is necessary. Healthcare professionals and others who have direct contact with COVID-19 patients should use approved respiratory protection that follows the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC.

Finally, it is important to remember that COVID-19 is not associated with any particular nationality or racial group. Although people who live in or travel to affected areas have a higher risk of catching and spreading the virus, anyone who is exposed to the virus may become infected. It is important to avoid stereotyping, making negative remarks, and behaving unkindly to people based on assumptions. The most important thing you can do to protect yourself, your family, and your community from COVID-19 is to follow the good hygiene practices we discussed.

SOCIAL DISTANCING IN THE WORKPLACE



This talk discusses practices for social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

Materials to have on hand:

- Disinfectants in use at the facility
- Gloves and sample cloth face coverings

Items for attendees to consider during the talk:

- What is the purpose of social distancing?
- What steps should you take when you cannot maintain an appropriate distance from other people?

TALK

Social distancing is the practice of keeping physical space between yourself and other people who are not members of your own household. Social distancing is an important way to limit the spread of infectious diseases such as COVID-19.

During an outbreak of infectious disease, social distancing is important both indoors and outdoors. Certain diseases, including COVID-19, can be spread even before a person experiences symptoms.

Therefore, it is important to follow social distancing recommendations even if you do not feel sick.

To practice social distancing, stay at least 6 feet away from anyone who is not a member of your immediate household. On the job, this may mean working farther away from your coworkers, clients, and customers than you ordinarily would. Away from work, it means avoiding crowded areas and gatherings and limiting your outings to essential errands only.

Avoid sharing tools, phones, headsets, and other objects with coworkers, and frequently disinfect surfaces in high-traffic areas. Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds, and when soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol. If you cough or sneeze, do so into your elbow.

We have put certain measures in place to keep people safe in the work environment. While some of these measures may be directed at customers or clients, try to follow them as an employee as much as you can. Specifically, we are using:

[Select the measures in use at your facility.]

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SOCIAL DISTANCING IN THE WORKPLACE

- Tape or signage to mark floors and aisles with 6-foot intervals
- A one-way traffic pattern for people to move through the facility
- Plexiglass barriers between employees and customers or clients
- Restrictions on nonemployee access to the facility
- Limits on the number of people allowed in the facility at once
- Staggered shifts to allow employees to maintain safe distances
- Disposable versions of any objects touched by customers
- Conducting as much business as possible by phone or online
- Encouraging or requiring customers to use curbside pickup options
- ***[Any other social distancing measures that apply]***

For interactions closer than 6 feet that cannot be avoided, gloves and cloth face coverings can help to reduce the risk of infection. However, it is important to remember that these measures do not completely eliminate the risk. Both gloves and face coverings can become contaminated, so avoid touching your face just as you would if you were not wearing them, and wash your hands immediately after removing these items.

A cloth face covering is not as effective as a respirator for shielding you from a person who is sick and showing symptoms; however, these coverings can help reduce the spread by people who are not experiencing symptoms but may be carrying the virus without knowing it. A cloth face covering should cover both your mouth and your nose. It should fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face, allow you to breathe comfortably, include multiple layers of fabric, and be able to be laundered and machine-dried.

In addition to these social distancing measures, stay home from work if you are feeling sick, and contact your supervisor and your healthcare provider if you are concerned that you have been exposed to COVID-19 or another infectious disease.

Stop Germs! Wash Your Hands.

When?

- After using the bathroom
- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage



How?



Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.



Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.



Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.



Rinse hands well under clean, running water.



Dry hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important things we can do to stop the spread of germs and stay healthy.

LIFE IS BETTER WITH

CLEAN HANDS



www.cdc.gov/handwashing



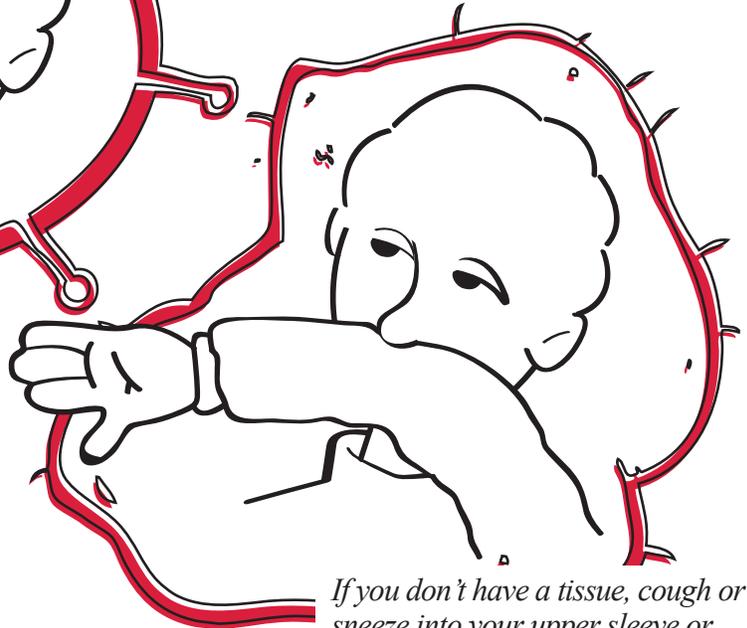
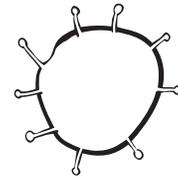
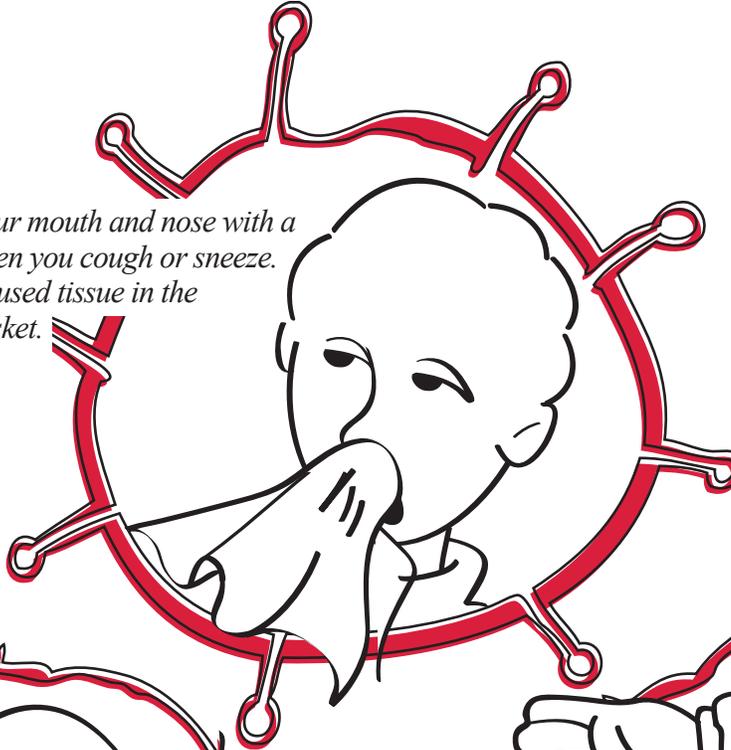
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Cover Cough

— *Stop the spread of germs that can make you and others sick!* —

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Put your used tissue in the waste basket.



If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.



You may be asked to put on a facemask to protect others.

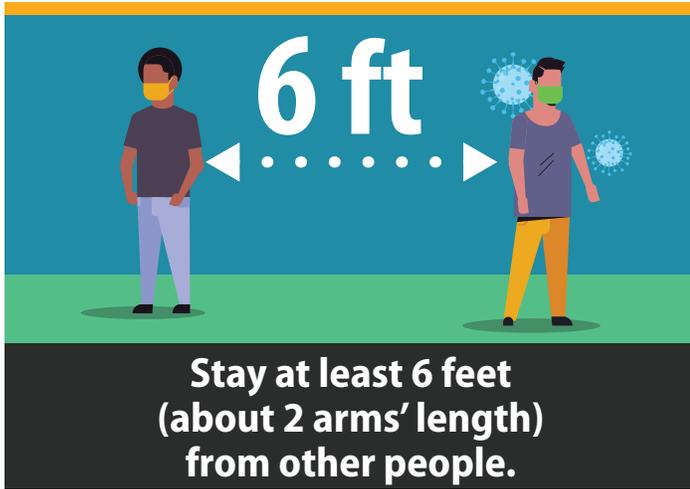


Wash hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.



Stop the Spread of Germs

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.



cdc.gov/coronavirus