

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

**INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES IN WORKPLACES IN
THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19**

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Foreword

This interim guidance is intended for employers, business enterprises, government and non-governmental institutions in providing advice to staff in workplace settings on preventing spread of COVID-19 infection. It is based on currently available information about covid-19 and is subject to review from time to time when new information is available.

All workers in formal or informal employment form the mainstay of the economy of our country and therefore their health and safety in their workplaces must be guaranteed to ensure socio economic development. Covid-19 pandemic has affected every aspect of socio-economic development and as the country gears up for resumption of work, it is important to take cognizance of the disease spread in the workplace and take remedial measures to combat the spread.

The concepts in this guidance include:

- a) Actions required to be put in place by employers and management to Prevent spread of covid-19 infection
- b) Procedures and requirements for routine disinfection and cleaning of a workplace
- c) Procedures and requirements for disinfection and cleaning of offices and public spaces where there are suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19
- d) Precautionary measures against spraying of people with disinfectants (such as in a tunnel, cabinet, or chamber)
- e) Recommended standard practices such as use of face masks, social distancing and hand hygiene in the workplace
- f) Requirements to periodically conduct risk assessment and evaluate the level of preparedness to prevent covid-19 pandemic in the workplace.



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1.0 Introduction

This interim guidance has been developed in response to the new Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by the SARS-CoV2 virus. It is intended for workplace managers, employees and employers in every workplace both public and private, but it is also relevant for the national, county, and sub-county Ministry of health management levels for decision making and planning. It is based on currently available information about COVID-19 and will be updated as and when new information is available.

2.0. Preventing spread of COVID-19 infection

At the workplaces, the employers and management shall ensure that they:

- Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene at the entrance to the workplace and in other areas where they will be seen.
- Provide workers with tissues, wipes and waste bins lined with appropriate plastic bag so that they can be emptied without contacting the contents.
- Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace in multiple locations and in common areas to encourage hand hygiene.
- Instruct workers to clean their hands frequently, using soap and water for at least 20 seconds or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 70% alcohol.
- Continue routine environmental cleaning and consider additional measures as described in this document.
- Brief the workers, contractors and customers that anyone with even a mild cough or low-grade fever (37.3 C or more) needs to stay at home.
- Instruct any workers who develop flu-like symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath, fever) should go home immediately and contact the local public health authority or call ministerial toll-free number 719

3.0. Routine workplace environmental cleaning and disinfection:

- Cleaning, using soap or a neutral detergent, water, and mechanical action (brushing, scrubbing) removes dirt, debris, and other materials from surfaces. Then disinfection is used to inactivate (i.e. kill) pathogens and other microorganisms on surfaces.
- High-touch surfaces should be identified for priority disinfection (commonly used areas, door and window handles, light switches, kitchen and food preparation areas, bathroom surfaces, toilets and taps, touch screen personal devices, personal computer keyboards, hoists, lifts and work surfaces).
- Disinfectant solutions must always be prepared and used according to the manufacturer's instructions, including instructions to protect the safety and health of disinfection workers, use of personal protective equipment, and avoiding mixing different chemical disinfectants.

- Cleaning and disinfection, especially in areas where aerosols are generated to be conducted when no one is in the room and ensure all the doors and windows are closed and can only be accessed by human beings after 1 hour.

3.1. Cleaning offices and public spaces where there are suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19

Coronavirus symptoms are similar to a flu-like illness and include dry cough, sore throat, fever, tiredness or shortness of breath. Once symptomatic, all surfaces that the person has come into contact with must be cleaned including:

- All surfaces and objects which are contaminated with body fluids
- All potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as toilets, door handles, telephones, worktops, computers among others.
- If a person becomes ill in a shared space, these should be cleaned using disposable cloths and the usual detergents, according to current recommended workplace legislation and practice. Precautionary measures should be taken to protect cleaners.
- All wastes that have been in contact with the individual, including used tissues/wipes, and masks should be put in a red or yellow liner bag and tied. The liner bags should then be placed in a second liner bag and tied.
- The liner bags should be put in a safe place and marked as infectious waste for treatment and appropriate disposal. This should never be put together with general waste.

3.2. Spraying of people with disinfectants (such as in a tunnel, cabinet, or chamber)

- Spraying individuals with disinfectants (such as in a tunnel, cabinet, or chamber) **IS NOT RECOMMENDED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES**. This could be physically and psychologically harmful and would not reduce an infected person's ability to spread the virus through droplets or contact.
- Further, spraying individuals with chlorine and other toxic chemicals could result in eye and skin irritation, bronchospasm due to inhalation, and gastrointestinal effects such as nausea and vomiting.
- All booths, tunnels and cabinets installed and intended for purposes of disinfecting persons whether in public or private workplace should be brought down with immediate effect and any further pending installations discouraged
- Employers are encouraged to advise their staff and general public accessing their workplaces to adhere to laid down control measures of hand hygiene, keeping distance, observing cough etiquette, avoiding face touching and use of masks.

4.0. Use of facemasks

This may be considered when working in closed spaces with other persons, or when it is not possible to maintain a safe distance from other people. Such situations may arise not only in the workplace, but also at clients' premises, when carrying out visits or deliveries, or when using public transport.

It is essential that workers use facemasks properly so that they are effective and safe. The following considerations should be observed while putting on, using and removing masks.

- It should fit properly, completely covering the face from bridge of nose to the chin.
- Clean hands properly before putting the facemask on or taking it off.
- Only touch the cord or elastic at the back of the facemask when removing it, not the front as the front is perceived to have been contaminated.
- If the facemask is disposable, be sure to do so safely in a proper container.
- If reusable, wash the facemask as soon as possible after use with detergent at 60°C.
- The best way to reduce any risk of infection is good hygiene and avoiding direct or close contact (closer than 1.5 meters) with any potentially infected person. Any worker who deals with members of the public from behind a screen should be protected from airborne particles.

5.0. Social distancing in a workplace

Social distancing, also called “physical distancing,” means keeping space between oneself and other people while in and outside a workplace.

5.1. Workplace measures

- a) Encourage staff to telework when feasible:
 - In between departments
 - Interstate
 - Inter organization
 - When employee is on home surveillance
- b) Encourage no handshake policy
- c) Increasing physical space between workers at the worksite (minimum 1 meter apart)
- d) Staggering work schedules

5.2 Social distancing can further be enhanced through the following:

- Physical barriers, (Install transparent shields or other physical barriers where possible to separate employees)
- changing layout of workspaces,
- Closing or limiting access to workplace by members of public,
- Staggering shifts and breaks
- limiting large events, when and where feasible
- Use of signs, tape marks, or other visual cues such as decals or colored tape on the floor, placed 6 feet apart, to indicate where to stand when physical barriers are not possible
- Avoid crowding clients at the waiting area by ensuring the 1-meter distance between each client is maintained.
- Any over flow of clients should be advised to wait outside in an open space until their appointment time reaches.

6.0. Ventilation and air flow in a workplace.

Take steps to improve ventilation in the building:

- Ensure all ventilation systems in your workplace operate properly.
- Increasing the percentage of outdoor air
- Increasing total airflow supply to occupied spaces, if possible.

- Disabling demand-control ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on temperature or occupancy.
- Considering using natural ventilation (i.e., opening windows if possible and safe to do so) to increase outdoor air dilution of indoor air when environmental conditions and building requirements allow.
- Considering running the building ventilation system even during unoccupied times to maximize dilution ventilation.
- Having staff work in areas served by “clean” ventilation zones that do not include higher-risk areas such as visitor reception or exercise facilities (if open).
- Ensuring exhaust fans in restroom facilities are functional and operating at full capacity when the building is occupied.
- Considering using ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) as a supplement to help inactivate the virus.

7.0. Workplace risk assessment

The risk of work-related exposure to COVID-19 depends on the probability of coming into close (less than 1 meter) or frequent contact with people who may be infected with COVID-19 and through contact with contaminated surfaces and objects.

Hazards and risk factors resulting from the work environment and working conditions should be assessed systematically in the workplace. If the hazards cannot be eliminated completely, their significance to the health and safety of workers (magnitude of the risk) should be assessed and measures taken to reduce the risk to a manageable level or to eliminate it altogether.

Risk assessment at organizational level requires that organizations consider healthcare-associated COVID-19 risk at local level and according to the local context.

Organizational risk assessment and local guidance should not replace or reduce the ability of the health and social care worker to use appropriate PPE while providing care to patients or residents.

8.0 References.

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