

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Information for Businesses February 27, 2020

Many business organizations within New Hampshire are concerned about how the current outbreak of COVID-19 in China and other countries will impact their communities and are seeking ways to stay healthy. The New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services (NH DPHS) is working with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to support our communities and medical providers by developing guidance and education materials.

What is the difference between seasonal coronaviruses and the virus causing COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses but there are different types of coronavirus within that family. Some frequently cause the common cold, but the virus causing COVID-19 is a new type of coronavirus that we believe moved from animals into humans and is infecting people for the first time.

What are common symptoms of COVID-19?

For confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases, reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. Symptoms typically include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

How is COVID-19 spread?

This virus spreads primarily through respiratory droplets (such as occur when an infected person coughs). Risk for transmission between people is highest with close contact (e.g., family members, healthcare settings).

How is COVID-19 infection prevented or treated?

Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent infection with this virus, and there is no specific antiviral treatment recommended once infected. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

How should businesses prepare for the potential of coronavirus in their community?

- Continue to monitor up to date information from health officials. See links to key websites below.
- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home.
- Emphasize respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees.
- Perform routine environmental cleaning.
- Prepare for possible increased numbers of employee absences.
- Identify essential business functions, essential jobs or roles, and critical elements to maintain business operations.
- Plan to minimize exposure between employees and also between employees and the public, if public health officials call for social distancing.
- Review CDC's guidelines for businesses which outline these key actions and others in greater detail:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html>

What preventive measures can employees and customers take to help reduce the spread of respiratory viruses?

Employees and customers should follow these steps to prevent the spread of respiratory infections:

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve. Following use, dispose of tissues into trash and wash hands or use alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wash hands often for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing or sneezing. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Stay home until you have been fever free for at least 24 hours without taking any fever reducing medication and are feeling better.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- Encourage/recommend the annual influenza vaccine.

What precautions should be taken for employees who traveled internationally?

Employees should avoid all travel to any locations for which CDC has issued a Level 3 travel notice. See CDC travel notice website: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>

Employees who have returned from mainland China are being monitored by public health authorities and must stay home for 14 days after their arrival.

Employees who have returned from other locations with travel notices for COVID-19 may continue to attend work. They should be counseled that if symptoms develop (e.g. fever, cough, or shortness of breath), they should:

- Seek medical care. Before going to a doctor's office or emergency room, the individual should call ahead and tell the provider or office about recent travel and symptoms.
- Stay home and away from close contact with others.
- Practice strict respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene including covering the nose and mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

Business cleaning procedures

Businesses should routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label. Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

Where can I go for the most up-to-date information about the COVID-19 outbreak?

Outbreaks involving COVID-19 evolve quickly and recommendations from public health officials may change as new information becomes available. Please check the following websites often for updated information:

- U.S. CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/summary.html>
- NH DPHS website: <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/2019-ncov.htm>