



**NKYHEALTH**  
NORTHERN KENTUCKY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

# ILLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Good policies that promote a culture of health can stop the spread of illness in the workplace, translating into a healthy and productive workforce.

## Coronavirus Disease 2019

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 is a type of coronavirus that was first detected in Wuhan, China in December 2019. The U.S. has detected cases of the virus. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough and difficulty breathing.

Currently, individuals who are at risk for COVID-19 include those who have recently travelled to areas where the disease is spreading, and/or have had close contact with an individual diagnosed with the illness.

## What Can Employers Do?

While COVID-19 is getting a lot of attention, employers and businesses should be prepared year-round to respond to illness in the workplace. Here are some steps you can take to prevent illness and promote wellness in your workplace:

- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home. This includes adopting sick leave policies that are flexible and consistent with public health guidance, and ensuring that employees are aware of these policies.
- If an employee does become ill, remember to maintain confidentiality.
- Emphasize the importance of hand washing and covering coughs/sneezes with a tissue or your elbow. Make sure your workplace is stocked with tissues, soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizer and trash receptacles.
- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops and doorknobs using an EPA-registered cleaning/disinfectant product. ([https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list\\_03-03-2020.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf))
- Prepare for possible increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in family members and/or dismissals of early childhood programs and K-12 schools due to high levels of absenteeism or illness.
- If employees are travelling, check the CDC's Traveler's Health Notices for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country of travel.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/guidance-business-response.html>

### Did you know?

90% of workers admit coming to work sick (Society of Human Resource Management, 2019).

54% of workers said they came into work sick because they had too much to do (Society of Human Resource Management, 2019).

57% of workers say they would tell a co-worker to go home if they were sick (NSF International, 2014).

24% of workers say they would tell their co-worker not to use common supplies (e.g. staplers, computers, etc.) if sick (NSF International, 2014).

For more information,  
visit <https://www.nkyhealth.org>,  
or call 859-341-4264.

# WORKPLACE CHECKLIST

As employers, you can plan and make decisions now that will protect the health of your staff during a disease outbreak in the community. Plan policies and strategies to increase the space between staff or limit face-to-face contact. These measures may help more staff stay well, and keep the workplace running smoothly. Use this checklist to help you take steps to plan and protect the health of your staff.

- Create or update your emergency plans.
- Strategize how to increase space or limit contact between staff, if possible (for example, teleworking and conference calls).
- Establish flexible leave policies for staff during a disease outbreak in the community.
- Share your plans with staff.
- Stay informed about the local outbreak situation and school closures.
- Encourage staff to practice healthy behaviors, such as staying home when they're sick, covering their coughs and sneezes, and washing their hands often.
- Provide supplies to prevent the spread of disease, such as tissues and soap.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as computers and door knobs, using an EPA-registered cleaning/disinfectant product. ([https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list\\_03-03-2020.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf))
- Implement a monitoring system to track staff absences due to the disease.
- Update staff, customers and suppliers with information about how your business is responding to the outbreak.



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