Prevention and mitigation of COVID-19 outbreaks in the workplace

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COVID-19 clusters at workplaces

**Occupations most at risk**

- Healthcare professionals
- Drivers and transport workers
- Service and sales workers, cleaning and domestic workers
- Production workers
- Education occupations
- Community and social services
- Construction and extraction workers
- Public safety workers

**Risk factors**

- Close contact with others – business meetings, interaction with colleagues or clients, close proximity to others for long duration
- Lack of hygiene
- Poor ventilation
- Crowded working and transportation conditions
- Crowded dormitories

Common features of workplace clusters

- Low or middle-skilled occupations with frequent contact with clients, work on customer premises or public places
- Most clusters are traced to asymptomatic and very mild symptomatic index case
- Prolonged contact with index case in an enclosed environment – meeting room, processing facility
- Poor ventilation, individual air conditioners and fans
- Inadequate workplace policies for stay home if unwell – no social protection for self isolation and quarantine
- In cases of community transmission difficult to distinguish between community and workplace transmission
- Some clusters linked to social events among co-workers outside the workplace
Prevention

- **Physical distancing** at least 1 meter from anyone all the time, ensure compliance through engineering and administrative controls
  - If physical distancing not possible consider suspending the activity, or wear face coverings (cloth mask 6 layers)
- Provide facilities for **hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene**
- Environmental clean up and **disinfection** of commonly touched surfaces
- Regular **risk assessment** and update for safety protocols
  - Interventions to reduce social mixing – staggering work and rest hours, split teams
- **Risk communication** and engagement of workers
  - Stimulate safe behaviour and adherence to public health measures at work, at home, in the community
  - Create blame-free environment for expressing safety concerns
- **Policies to stay home if unwell**
  - Sick leave policy
  - Remove incentives to continue work if sick
- **Facilitate isolation** of people suspected of having COVID-19 and contact tracing
  - Keep records of people in meetings and tasks in close proximity
  - Isolate and report to public health authorities any suspected case

WHO, Considerations for public health and social measures in the workplace in the context of COVID-19, 10 May 2020
WHO, ‘Asks’ to the private sector in the response to COVID-19, 11 June 2020