

**COVID-19**



# Guidance for Employers and Businesses in Nigeria



**NCDC Toll-free Number: 080097000010**

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## Introduction

COVID-19 is caused by a virus that spreads through droplets released when an infected person coughs or sneezes. A person can become infected with this new coronavirus by being in close contact (within 2 metres) of a person infected with COVID-19. Infection can also spread by touching a surface that an infected person coughed or sneezed on.

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), is monitoring the situation daily. The most important advice is for all employers to encourage their employees to maintain good hand and respiratory hygiene to remain safe, while at the same time ensuring the business and office premises are cleaned at least once a day, with frequently touched surfaces like counter tops, desks, light switches, door handles etc. cleaned more frequently.

Employers must ensure that employees have access to clean water and soap at all times. Alcohol-based sanitisers are also advised to be kept on business premises for employees and customers. Staff members and customers should use a hand sanitiser on entering and exiting the business or office premises.

The best way for business owners and employers to ensure that employees and customers are protected from COVID-19 infection is to:

- Encourage employees to wash their hands frequently
- Encourage employees to cough or sneeze into a tissue, or into their elbow (if no tissue is available)
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and premises at a minimum of once daily
- Mandate unwell employees to stay at home and observe their symptoms

On 23rd March, 2020, the Federal Government issued directives for the cancellation of large gatherings, places of worship, social and sporting events for an initial period of time as a measure to reduce the spread of the disease. This

is already being implemented and enforced at state level by State Governments. More measures will be instituted by the Federal and State governments as the situation evolves. This may include the closure of non-essential businesses.

The NCDC has launched a #TakeResponsibility campaign to ensure Nigerians and residents take individual and collective responsibility for reducing the risk of the coronavirus disease spreading. Organisations are encouraged to join this campaign by developing key messaging around the following thematic areas;

1. Wash your hands frequently with soap under running water or use an alcohol-based sanitiser
2. Cough/sneeze into tissue and dispose properly or cough/sneeze into your elbow
3. Avoid large gatherings and physical contact
4. Clean all surfaces frequently with disinfectants
5. Get information only from official sources
6. If you return from international travel, self-isolate for 14 days and if you develop symptoms, call NCDC's toll free number: **080097000010**

*The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control offers the following guidance to employers and business owners in Nigeria.*

## **What Is COVID-19?**

Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are normally transmitted between animals and people. The 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. It was first detected on the 7th of January 2020 in Wuhan, China. Some coronaviruses can be transmitted from person to person, usually after close contact with an infected patient, for example, in a household or healthcare setting. For this novel coronavirus (COVID-19), while most initial transmission appeared to be zoonotic, person-to-person transmission is the most important common mode of transmission currently.



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## What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The incubation period of COVID-19 is between **2 and 14 days**. This is the time between when a person gets infected and when they start showing symptoms. If a person remains well **14 days** after contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, it is unlikely that they have been infected.

The following symptoms may develop within **14 days** after exposure to someone who has COVID-19 infection:

- cough
- shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing
- fever
- muscle pain

Generally, these infections can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. However, there are current infection of coronavirus in young people who became exposed to the virus.

## How is COVID-19 spread?

The spread of COVID-19 is most likely to happen when there is close contact (within **2 metres**) with an infected person. The risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person.

Droplets (respiratory secretions) produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes containing the virus can cause transmission of the virus.

There are two routes by which people could become infected:

- Secretions can be directly transferred into the mouths or noses of people who are nearby (within **2 metres**) or could be inhaled into the lungs
- It is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface or object such as a doorknob that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes.

## How can employers reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19?

The best way to prevent infection and reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 is to avoid being exposed to the virus by following basic hand and respiratory hygiene measures.

- Promote thorough and frequent handwashing, with soap and water for at least **20 seconds** and make available alcohol sanitisers in office and business premises, especially at all entrances
- Employees should wash their hands:
  - o before leaving home
  - o on arrival at their place of employment
  - o after using the toilet
  - o before food preparation
  - o before eating any food, including snacks
  - o before leaving their place of employment
- Encourage employees to cover their nose and mouth with tissue when coughing or sneezing. Used tissue should immediately be disposed in a covered bin followed by washing of hands. Alternatively, sneeze or cough into a bent elbow if no tissue is available
- Ensure provision of bins in office and business premises
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands to avoid transfer of the virus from surfaces, into eye or nose
- Display signage in your office or business premises reminding staff and visitors to maintain good and respiratory hygiene
- Employers who feel unwell should stay at home and should not attend any public gatherings. If symptoms akin to COVID-19 develop, call NCDC on **0800 970 00010**. Office and business premises should be cleaned and disinfected daily, especially frequently touched surfaces like tables, door handles, countertops, computers, light and air conditioner switches



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## **What can employers and businesses do to protect the health and safety of staff?**

- Employees who have returned from outside the country in the last **14 days** must self-isolate whether they have symptoms or not. This includes avoiding going to work for **14 days** after they left the country with ongoing transmission
- Develop an infectious disease preparedness action plan to reduce the risk of exposure in the workplace and communicate it to all staff members.
- Ensure the contact details and emergency contact details of all staff members is kept up to date and is easily accessible at all times
- Ensure that staff members know how to spot the symptoms of coronavirus and they have a clear understanding what to do if they feel unwell
- Provide handwashing facilities and ensure employees have access to water and soap, also ensuring the working environment is kept clean
- Employers are encouraged to develop policies and practices that enable staff to work more flexibly and remotely e.g. working from home
- Employers should develop social distancing strategies to safeguard the health and safety of employees whose role requires face-to-face interactions with customers
- Discourage the sharing of work equipment, tools, computers, phones and desks
- Employers should limit face-to-face meetings with clients, but promote the use of meeting technology support systems like *Zoom*, *Skype* in conducting business meeting virtually and remotely
- Employers need to stay abreast of guidelines and recommendations from federal and state health authorities, regarding changes in national directives as a result of the changing transition of coronavirus locally and nationally

**What to do if  
an employee  
becomes unwell  
and show  
symptoms or  
believe they have  
been exposed to  
COVID-19**

Contact NCDC immediately on **0800 9700 0010** or the State Ministry of Health's helpline and ensure employee self-isolate, away from other individuals.

**What to do if  
there is a case  
of suspected  
COVID-19 in your  
workplace?**

If anyone has been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a workplace, they should immediately self-isolate and contact NCDC on 0800 9700 0010. While awaiting laboratory test results for COVID-19, employers need to carry out a risk assessment to ascertain whether there is a need to close the office or business premises, although you may encourage staff to work from home until the outcome of test results is known. Members of staff should also continue to ensure basic hygiene advice is followed and work premises are kept clean and waste is disposed of appropriately. Once the results are available, business owners will be advised accordingly.

**What to do if a  
case of COVID-19  
is confirmed in  
your workplace?**

NCDC and/or the State Ministry of Health will contact the workplace to discuss the case, identify people who had been in contact with the staff member and advise on further actions or precautions that should be taken, based on assessment of the work premises.

Closure of the business premises and self-isolation by all members of staff will most likely be advised.



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## **What to do if staff members in your institution are contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 who was symptomatic while attending work?**

The definition of a contact includes:

- any staff member in close face-to-face or touching contact including those undertaking small group work (**within 2 metres of the case**)
- talking with or being coughed on for any length of time while the individual is symptomatic
- anyone who has cleaned up any bodily fluids of the individual
- close friendship groups
- any staff member living in the same household as a confirmed case, or equivalent setting
- contacts are not considered cases and if they are well, they are very unlikely to have spread the infection to others, however:
- they should be asked to self-isolate at home for **14 days** from the last time they had contact with the confirmed case
- if they develop any symptoms within their **14-day** observation period they should contact NCDC on **0800 9700 0010** or **the State Ministry of Health's hotline**. If and they test positive for COVID-19 they will become a confirmed case and will be treated for the infection

## **Where do I get accurate information from?**

Be aware that media speculation is rife about COVID-19 and not everything you read in the newspapers or online or hear is accurate or verified. The release of trusted and accurate information will always be through the Ministry of Health or the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control. You can find the latest information and advice through the following;

*NCDC Toll-Free Number:* **0800 9700 0010**

*SMS:* **0809 955 5577**

*WhatsApp:* **0708 711 0839**

*Website for COVID-19 resources:* **covid19.ncdc.gov.ng**

*Twitter/Facebook:* **@NCDCgov**