



Strategies to Manage the Impact of Coronavirus for your Employees

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The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Australian Government: Department of Health are continuing to expand their knowledge of COVID-19. They provide individuals worldwide with advice on measures to protect their health and reduce the spread of this outbreak.

Businesses are required to identify hazards, and their associated risks, in the workplace and take reasonable action to eliminate or minimise the risk. This includes preventing exposure to widespread acute respiratory illnesses, including the coronavirus.

This tip sheet provides some up-to-date information on what the coronavirus is, how individuals can protect themselves, and some recommended strategies for employers to use.

What is Coronavirus?

The word coronavirus refers to a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. In December 2019, a new strain, not previously identified in humans, was first reported in Wuhan, China. This novel coronavirus disease has now officially been called COVID-19 by WHO.

Symptoms of this virus range from a mild cough to pneumonia, with the virus being spread from person to person. It takes between 2 and 10 days before people who are infected become sick and develop a fever and show symptoms of the virus.

For current and up-to-date information on the latest medical advice and official reports, please visit the [Australian Government Coronavirus COVID-19 Health Alert website](https://www.health.gov.au/coronavirus).

How to Protect Yourself?

On 27 February 2020, the Prime Minister announced the activation of the 'Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)'. The Department of Health recommend practicing good hand and respiratory hygiene and social distance.

- **Good hand hygiene:** wash your hands frequently using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
- **Good respiratory hygiene:** cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing, discard tissues immediately, and clean your hands
- **Social distancing:** stand 1.5 metres apart from others, follow maximum gathering guidelines, and wear a mask when in public.

Mythbusters

Can people receiving packages from China contract coronavirus?

No, you are not at risk of contracting the new coronavirus. The WHO reports the virus does not survive long on objects, such as packages.

Are older or younger people more susceptible to the new coronavirus?

WHO confirms that people of all ages can be infected; however, people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease) appear more vulnerable. Despite this, people of all ages should take steps to protect themselves.

Are antibiotics effective in preventing and treating the new virus?

No. The new coronavirus is a virus, so antibiotics, which treat bacterial infections, are not used in prevention or treatment.

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Recommended Strategies for Employers

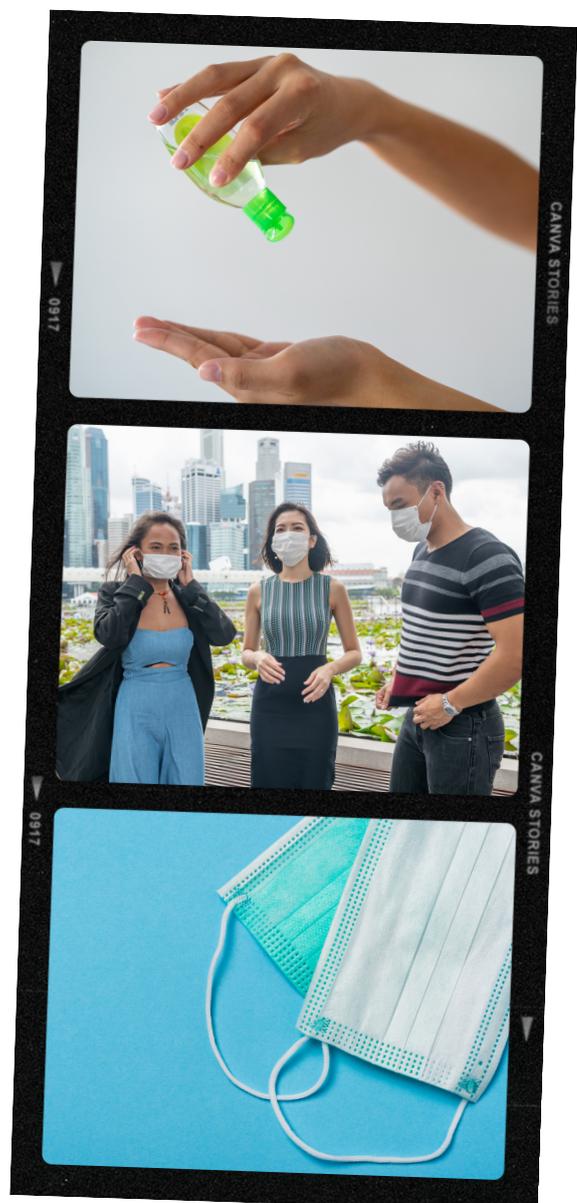
- Provide information to staff obtained from reputable and reliable sources to reduce any potential hysteria or fear around the outbreak
- Encourage staff to practice good hand and respiratory hygiene by providing adequate soap or alcohol-based hand rub in the workspace
- Place posters that encourage good hand and respiratory hygiene at the entrance to your workplace
- Pay attention to travel warnings and consider adjusting staff travel to countries
- Ensure your sick leave policies are consistent with recommended guidelines, and that employees are aware of these policies
- Perform routine environmental cleaning and provide disposable antibacterial wipes
- Review flexible working options, including work-from-home arrangements
- If an employee is stuck overseas, assist them to access adequate resources.

Employers are encouraged to maintain flexible policies that permit quarantined employees, or those required to stay home to care for a family member suspected of being infected from coronavirus, to access paid leave where possible or work from home.

Support is Available

The World Health Organization continues to release up-to-date information on COVID-19. The Australian Government: Department of Health continues to monitor the outbreak in Australia with the latest medical advice and official reports.

If you have teams or individuals in your workplace who are impacted directly by the coronavirus or presenting with heightened anxiety, worry, or fear of contracting the virus, reach out so we can provide guidance and support.



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